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# EL SUPREMO



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A ROMANCE OF THE GREAT  
DICTATOR OF PARAGUAY

BY  
EDWARD LUCAS WHITE



LONDON  
T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.  
1 ADELPHI TERRACE

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To the Scandalized and Indignant Ghosts  
of  
JOHN PARISH ROBERTSON  
and  
WILLIAM PARISH ROBERTSON  
this Book is ironically Dedicated.

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# CONTENTS

## BOOK III. VENTURA.

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIII. LOCALITIES AND CHARACTERS . . . . .	309
XXIV. A FLASH OF LIGHTNING . . . . .	325
XXV. FLEAS AND ECLIPSES . . . . .	340
XXVI. THE LISTS . . . . .	357
XXVII. THE YERBALES . . . . .	374
XXVIII. PRINCE BELTRAN . . . . .	387
XXIX. TOBACCO AND IRON . . . . .	400
XXX. THE REVOLUTIONISTS . . . . .	416
XXXI. CANOES . . . . .	430
XXXII. THE PENINSULA . . . . .	445
XXXIII. CATARACTS . . . . .	461
XXXIV. EMPRESS VENTURA . . . . .	476

## BOOK IV. BELTRAN.

XXXV. GAUCHOS . . . . .	499
XXXVI. HIDES . . . . .	511
XXXVII. JUANITA . . . . .	523
XXXVIII. IBIRAI . . . . .	539
XXXIX. THE CONVENTION . . . . .	553
XL. EL PERPETUO . . . . .	565
XLI. RIDDLES . . . . .	582
XLII. DISSOLUTION . . . . .	593
XLIII. AMNESTY . . . . .	610
XLIV. COMPUNCTIONS . . . . .	625
XLV. THE PROFILE . . . . .	643
XLVI. INTERCESSION . . . . .	656
XLVII. DUST AND ASHES . . . . .	665
XLVIII. CECILY . . . . .	682

## PREFACE

**I**NDUBITABLY one of the greatest men this world has ever produced, and, without exception, the most wonderful man ever born in either North or South America, was Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, Dictator of Paraguay from 1813 to 1840. Moreover, he was not only a great and extraordinary man, but a most interesting man. The records of his personality, doings and sayings, with the legends handed down concerning him, amount to a treasury of material for what newspaper men call "good copy."

Quite as truly is the period of his first dictatorship a gold-mine of local colour. Asuncion in 1816 abounded in striking characters, and was the scene of numerous romantic occurrences and dramatic events, projected on a singularly bizarre background, altogether unmatchable in human history. For the colonial aristocracy, proud, courtly and clad in gorgeous velvets and silks, failed to realise that their day had passed and struggled, for a while, against the established republic. The interaction of the viceregal society and the new government produced some startling contrasts.

Francia's individuality was so bewildering and peculiar that any one reading of him for the first time is likely to imagine him invented bodily. He is here portrayed just as history and legend have depicted him. Only his relation to the plot is fiction, and, even there, every episode in which he appears is founded on something recorded or traditional. The anecdotes related of him are scarcely anywhere modified.

The minor characters are mostly also historical. Only Hawthorne, Cecilia and Beltran, the Mayorgas and the Velardes are fictitious. Don Atanacio Cabañas, Sergeant Peter Campbell, Don Francisco Candiotti, Don José Carisimo, Don Gregorio de la Cerda, Don Pascual Echagüe, Don Juan José Francia, Don Pedro Francia, Don Larios Galvan,



Don Joaquin Lopez, Don Estanislao Machain, Fray Ignacio Maestre, Don Fernando de la Mora, Don Antonio Recalde, Don Domingo Rodriguez, Don Jacinto Ruiz, Fray Dalmacio Taboada, Don Bernardo Velasco, Leonardo Vera and Don Fulgencio Yegros, as well as Doña Juanita Bianquet, Doña Encarnacion Figueredo, Doña Juana Isquibel and Señorita Angelica Recalde are as authentic as their names and were as real as Abascal, Alvear, Artigas, Belgrano, Herrera, Perrichon, Pezuela, John Postlethwaite Esquire, San Martin, Ramirez, La Serna, Consul Robert Ponsonby Staples, and Mister George Washington Tuckerman.

Equally real were Banfi, Orrego and Soloaga, Señors Baiz, Barbeito, Bedoya, Casal, Chilaber, Decoud, Doméque, Figueredo, Gomez, La Guardia, Isasi, Jovellanos, Marecos, de Maria, Somellera, and Zelaya; Doctors Baiguer, Bargas, Dominguez, Narvaez and Sabola; Generals Caballero, Gamarra and Zevallos; Colonel Guerreros; Lieutenant Iturbe; Padres Bogarin, Caballero, Cañete, Loisaga, Montiel and Reloyos, as well as Bishop de Panés. The first names of these characters, however, it has been found advisable to alter: one can hardly find one's way through a history where everybody is addressed and mentioned by his first name, and where only one man out of twenty has escaped being christened Juan or José; in a romance any one would become hopelessly confused.

Dr. Parlett's first name was not Thomas, but, manifestly, the right name for him was Tom. Since there is no record of El Pelado's name nor of El Zapo's last name, they have been supplied. As for the pompous and tautological Secretary of State, both his real names were distressingly usual. They have therefore been altered to others more suitable to his personality.

Faithfully presented are the conditions of an anomalous period, when, for a brief three years after Paraguay became independent, her strange colony of Spanish aristocrats, isolated amid wildernesses in their affluent Arcadia, with their exotic social atmosphere, gaudy attire and exquisite manners, plotted and schemed to overthrow the long-suffering, stern and implacable despot who was to exterminate them.

BOOK I  
FRANCIA



# EL SUPREMO

## CHAPTER I

### A CHANCE MEETING

THE Octoroon girl was weeping so unrestrainedly, her face shining with tears, her hands swinging at her sides, her whole frame shaken by her sobs, that the stranger, halting in the thickest shade of one of the bigger orange trees, turned and gazed after her. His interest was aroused not only by the fury of her emotion and by the singular obviousness of her blended grief and rage, but also by the perception that, in her normal state, she must be a notably comely creature. He watched her white-clad figure as she half staggered, half ran, down the middle of the uneven road-way, until she hurled herself to her right into the cross-street up which he had just come, and passed out of his view.

When he wheeled to continue on his way he was aware of a rotund person approaching him, the only living thing in sight save here and there a cow, close under the shade of the prickly-pear hedges.

So, in the blinding glare of cloudless morning, under the dark, overarching orange trees, on a street, narrow, dirty, and anything but straight, they met. The tall, well-knit young man in quiet, close-fitting brown, was small-faced, with clear, grey-blue eyes, a hooked nose, and pink, boyish cheeks. The man, rubicund all over an ample countenance, his eyes watery grey, his surface suety, his outline pear-shaped, wore a loose, flapping suit of soiled, spotty, snuff-streaked black.

As they drew near each other the waddling, middle-aged fat man spoke, spoke in English:

"By your trousers you are by way of being a European; by your face you are no Latin; you look as if you might speak English."

"I do," the young man answered with a smile.

"Who says I'm drunk an hour after I wake?" the fat man demanded. "Could a drunken man recognise a Saxon half a cable length away? I knew you for what you are. You're a stranger in Asuncion. There are too few of us here and we ought to hang together. My name's Parlett—Doctor Parlett when sober, and the best surgeon in all South America; Tom Parlett when drunk, and that's oftener, and drunk in the gutter at that."

"My name is William Hawthorne," the young man said. "At your service, Doctor."

"And I at yours, I am sure," said the doctor. "By your voice you are a Yankee."

"Born in Massachusetts," Hawthorne confessed.

"Almost anywhere else on earth I'd curse you for a damned rebel," spoke the doctor cheerfully, "and pass you by. Here in this damned still-born abortion of a new nation, this misbegotten Paraguay, every foreigner needs to stand by every other; needs it more pressingly and more bitterly than I trust you'll ever know. You're in luck to meet me. I'll give you warning in time of how to conduct yourself. What do I care if England and your fool make-believe country are at war? You and I here are brothers, and we need to be. How goes the war for that matter?"

"The war is over," Hawthorne said; "the treaty was signed a year ago last December, and peace declared at once. The news has been a little slow reaching the frigates cruising in these seas."

"It had not reached Asuncion till you came," said Parlett. "Two-year-old news is no rarity here since Artigas and his ruffians began to rampage up and down Entre Rios and the Banda Oriental. How long were you on the river?"

"Four months and two days from Buenos Aires," Hawthorne answered.

"Sticking on sand-bars, eh?" laughed the doctor. "The river is enough to drive any man to drink, coming up. I don't remember much of it myself—drunk all the while. What did you find to pass away the time besides watching the *vagueano* and his Indian crew?"

"I had fellow-passengers," said Hawthorne.

"Indeed," Parlett puffed. "What vessel were you on, and what kind of a vessel?"

"A brig," Hawthorne told him, "called *Nuestra Señora del Carmen*."

"One of Isasi's," the doctor commented. "His are the best on the river; the best found and the best sailed. Who were your fellow-passengers? We are all one family at Asuncion, we gentry, and new arrivals interest us all."

"There was Don Beltran Jaray——" Hawthorne began.

The doctor broke in excitedly.

"You don't say so! His grandmother will be out of the body to see him again. I've been teasing the old girl, telling her she'd never live to welcome him home. She's a bird, is old Doña Juana Isquibel!"

"I have heard of her from her grandson," Hawthorne interjected precisely.

The doctor ignored the tone of rebuke.

"Who were the others?" he enquired.

"Señorita Ventura Velarde," Hawthorne replied.

"By Jove!" Parlett exclaimed. "Beltran and Ventura on the same ship! The only two Paraguayans who ever went to Europe and came back! This is news! You must have had an agreeable voyage! What courage for Ventura to chance the Artigueños! What recklessness! What foolishness! And had she no duenna?"

"She had indeed," Hawthorne answered. "Doña Juanita Bianquet, who had her four children along."

"Ye Gods!" the doctor cried. "Four heroines on one ship. Ventura and Juanita and the two little girls! This is an event. No vessel with a woman aboard has come up since the fighting broke out five years ago next September. I'll be glad to see both. Ventura's father is the richest man in Paraguay and related to half Asuncion. His sending his daughter to Spain to be educated has been the staple topic for gossips at every *tertulia* I've attended since I came here. Whenever conversation flagged some old hen would pipe up about the folly of it, and its being flying in the face of Providence. I've heard of Ventura till I know her well. And Bianquet is a good fellow and a jolly companion. We've spent a considerable share of our time together. He's been very lonesome, for he's fond of his wife and children. He'll be wild. He had no idea she would try to join him here, in these fierce times. You must have had more than a few compensations for barra-

*duras* and starving on jerked beef between cattle-purchases, even at four months of it. As it is you're two months later than the last news we have had. Is it true that we've got Boney?"

"True enough," said Hawthorne.

"And where is he now?" Parlett enquired, his filmy eyes brightening.

"On St. Helena, under guard since last October," Hawthorne replied.

"What and where is St. Helena?" the doctor queried.

"A small island," the youth answered, "somewhere on the South Atlantic, off the coast of Africa. He's a British prisoner there and the King's frigates patrol the sea all about. He's there for life, to a certainty. He'll never escape. Europe will never see him again."

"And it was Wesley licked him?" Parlett enquired. "And all in one battle?"

"True enough," Hawthorne affirmed. "One great battle, in the low countries, at a place called Waterloo."

"Good job for Arthur Wesley," the doctor commented. "We were fags together at Eton. Used to call each other Tommie and Artie. Viscount Wellesley, I suppose, would never stoop to recognize me now. Do you know you look a good deal like him?"

"So I have been told before," Hawthorne smiled.

"You're like him," Parlett affirmed. "Lucky for you if you are one hundredth as sharp. You'll need sharpness here. What brings you to Paraguay, anyhow?"

"I am expecting to make my fortune here," Hawthorne told him.

"There are fortunes to be made here," Parlett declared. "I'd have made mine ten times over already if I could keep sober and hold my hand from play. You may make a fortune indeed. But keep out of politics and keep your mouth shut. This is one man's country and beware how you cross him. It is not necessary to name him; you know the man I mean."

"Yes," said Hawthorne. "You mean Dr. Francia."

Parlett's crimson face turned a dull, blotchy brown. He laid a bloated hand on Hawthorne's shoulder, with a solicitous, protecting gesture. He glanced all about them.

"There you go," he said. "No sooner had I told you

to keep your mouth shut than you open it. Keep your mouth shut, I tell you! If any one had heard you, you would have been as good as dead now. Almost any one else would go straight and tell him, and he is Sheriff, Lord Advocate, Lord Chancellor, Generalissimo, King, Pope, God and owner of Paraguay. There never has been an autocrat like him on earth. He is the most redoubtable man alive. Within his sphere he is more terrific than ever Boney was on his vaster stage. He can be gentle, considerate, just and generous, and often is. He can be petty and vindictive as a stray cur. He is always uncertain and generally as unexpected as a thunderbolt."

The fat doctor paused for very lack of breath. Hawthorne looked him deliberately up and down from his cocked hat to his silver-buckled low shoes and back again.

"You fool," the doctor burst out. "You think I'm drunk and trying to scare you for a joke. Mark my words, young man. If you are ever again tempted to name that name fancy yourself on the *banquillo* with three musket-muzzles pointing at the small of your back; imagine yourself listening for the word that is to be the last that you are ever to hear; conceive what you would give then not to have spoken that name, and don't speak it."

Hawthorne's unperturbed, supercilious gaze again travelled over the doctor's person from the ground up. Into the bleared, shifting eyes, his resolute, boyish eyes looked with a sparkle in them of amused incredulity. A knowing, condescending smile hovered about the corners of his firm young mouth. He had the air of one who thinks much and says nothing, the demeanour of a listener who dissents but does not deem it worth while to argue. His manner implied a tolerant superiority, his expression betrayed a hint of contemptuous indulgence which exasperated his besotted interlocutor.

The doctor again burst out.

"You unconscionable ass! You think I am quizzing you. Conceive of an exile in this cursed wilderness wantonly lying to entrap a helpless waif! I may be rum-soaked but I am incapable of such vileness. And you know it. You feel it. My lad, my boy, my dear boy, what I say is no joke. Never name him. When you must speak of him, if you must speak of him, give him his titles; and until you



know them and can get them right do not speak of him at all. You are a foreigner and his prisoner. Every man, woman and child in Paraguay is his prisoner, every one under watch, every one under suspicion; but foreigners most of all under suspicion and under watch and most particularly his prisoners. You must call upon him at once. You are too late to do so to-day. But make it your first business to-morrow. You know where to find him?"

"At the Government House, I suppose?" Hawthorne replied.

"That's the point," Parlett rejoined. "Whenever you hear anybody say 'Government House' or 'Palacio' in Asuncion, ask him does he mean the old Government House, which is the same as the Cabildo, or the new Government House, which is the old Jesuit College.

"As you came up the stone stairs from the landing place, you noticed a great sprawling mass of buildings directly in front of you, with a stone cross on the last gable towards the square?"

"Certainly I noticed it," Hawthorne agreed. "It was the nearest and the biggest object in sight."

"Naturally, being the only two-story structure in all Paraguay," the surgeon resumed. "Well, that's the former Jesuit College, the new Palacio, the new Government House, Larrazabal's Government House.

"Now, when you turned the north-east corner of it and came into the plaza, you saw on your right, facing the south-west side of the Plaza, a squat rectangle of red-tile roof resting on square stone pillars, along its verandahs?"

"I counted them," Hawthorne said; "eighteen on the side towards the plaza facing the river, thirteen on the others, reckoning the corner columns in each recount, all whitewashed."

"You know what I mean then," Parlett pursued. "That's the old Government House, Irala's Government House, the Cabildo where the Intendentes lived from Irala to Moneda. Larrazabal lived there until the priests were expelled, then moved into their empty college as being a more commodious and convenient residence, and turned their abandoned church at the corner into a *sala* for *dias de besamanos*, for official levees, as it has been ever since.

"So for fifty years now Irala's old Government House

has been used for town meetings and official business offices. Call it the Cabildo when you mention it. Yet folks call it Palacio and Government House still, and whenever any one utters those words you have to ask him does he mean the Cabildo or El Supremo's house, which is Larrazabal's new Government House, the old Jesuit College, the two-story building.

"That's where you'll visit him to-morrow. You ought to get it right, for I've gone over it three times.

"And when you call on him be sure you use the correct etiquette and forms of address before him. I cannot tell you here. I've talked too long now. I was dry before I met you and talking makes me drier; it is shady under these trees, but a cool *patio*, a deep arcade, a high-ceilinged, thick-walled, earth-floored room is cooler. I am on my way to Dr. Bargas' wine-shop. Will you not join me? We can drink at our leisure and I can explain to you how to avoid destruction in this mad country."

"I thank you for the invitation," Hawthorne replied sedately. "But I have letters of introduction to Don Vicente Mayorga. I feel that my first business in Asuncion is to present them."

"You could not find a better friend," Parlett declared. "The richest man in Paraguay, save one, and a perfect gentleman. That is his house I had just passed when I saw you. Except the Velarde Mansion it is the handsomest residence here. You will find Don Vicente the prince of hosts and the most charming of men. He can and will tell you all you need to know of one whom I will not name. If you feel like talking to an old fool of a Johnny Bull after your siesta you will find me at the wine-shop of Dr. Jenofonte Bargas. When I am not asleep at my lodgings, or abroad plying my profession, I am always at Bargas' wine-shop. Any one in Asuncion can tell you the way to it. Meantime, good day to you, for I am dry and double dry."

He waddled on under the interlaced trees, picking his way through the half-dried mudholes, over and among the litter of loose stones and haphazard rubbish.

Hawthorne walked toward the house Dr. Parlett had indicated. It was big, white-walled and roofed with red tiles. It faced directly on the street, and was surrounded

by tall, dark-leaved orange trees like those along the roadway, so close together that their outer branches intermingled. Above them towered four great palms. Just before he reached it a little cavalcade came into sight down the gully from the right and wheeled into the street, vivid in the sunlight against the tall green bank, topped by a dense hedge, at which the street ended. There were four mulatto lancers on ewe-necked, rough-coated horses, lean and ribby. The lancers wore small round red caps, each with a tricolor cockade. Their white coats flapped negligently open over red waistcoats. Their white trousers were tucked into dirty raw-hide boots. They carried their lances in a careless, slouchy fashion. Two rode before the mule they convoyed and two behind it. On the mule was an emaciated young man. His fever-bright eyes, close-set to his small nose under black eyebrows, blazed at Hawthorne out of a sunburned face, half hidden under a scrubby, rough growth of beard. Round his hatless head was a foul bandage, soaked with blood over the forehead. His right leg and right arm were lashed with a great superabundance of rope to a long, rough, heavy wooden bar; his left arm was similarly bound to his body; his ankles were loaded with chains which passed under the mule's belly. With no bridle rein to steady himself by nor any saddle beneath him, he jounced wretchedly on the rough-trotting mule, his face drawn and pinched. The pitiful little procession clattered towards Hawthorne, the prisoner's chains jangling horridly. Just opposite where he stood against the corner of the house they wheeled to the right, straggled off down a cross street past a curving cactus hedge, and rounded its curve till they disappeared towards the market square and river bank from which he had come.

Hawthorne turned to the house.

Its windows were inscrutable, wholly shaded by greenalousies.

Above the arch of the doorway was a carving, evidently the similitude of a coat of arms. From the blank, even, unvaried whiteness of the house-wall it jutted, conspicuous by its prominence, flagrant with glaring pigments. Hawthorne scrutinized it, his head thrown back. What it might be meant for he could not make out.

If an armorial bearing, sculptured in high relief, had been weathered by time and exposure until almost unrecognisable, if the ill-defined remains of it had been copied by an ignorant journeyman, if his travesty had been similarly worn down by exposure and neglect, if another oaf had copied the worn remains, if the process had been repeated again and again, Hawthorne fancied the result might be much like what he saw.

The crest might be the distorted tradition of a plumed helmet, a bird with wings outspread, a bush or any one of a dozen other objects. The supporters might be meant for lions, unicorns, griffons, wyverns or almost any terrestrial quadrupeds or heraldic monsters; the quarterings were mere curves and lines of carving.

The whole was daubed with thick, ropy paint, evidently lavishly laid on, coat over coat, filling in all the depressions and hollows and effacing any sharp incisions. The tints were far from heraldic tinctures: a fearfully insistent pink made a sort of background, from which stood out the sharp green, dark red and darker blue, especially the blue. All the angles and bulges were touched up with a profusion of tarnished gold leaf.

It was a sort of nightmare escutcheon; one made of wax or confectioners' sugar, half melted and hastily repaired, might appear much like this bleared reminder of half-forgotten grandeurs.

The doorway was ample and broad, its sill was level with the walk, its flag-floor clean and cool. The door was wide open. Through it Hawthorne could see into a large *patio*, and across this courtyard he descried a column of an arcade. As he stepped under the arch a man appeared in the doorway from the *patio*.

He was a tallish, plump man and wore a cocked hat. Likewise he wore an amazing coat. It was of mazarine-blue cloth, and it had a wide collar, large flaps, broad cuffs, ample skirts and long tails. Also it had large, flat mother-of-pearl buttons, wherever buttons could possibly be attached to it. The man's waistcoat was embroidered and its numerous small buttons were of gold, as were the knee-buckles of his black knee-breeches and the larger buckles of his low shoes. White silk stockings showed off his plump and shapely calves. At his side he wore a gold-hilted court-

sword in a silver scabbard. In his right hand he carried a yellow, silver-ferruled, gold-headed cane, with a crimson silk cord and tassel. Fine lace ruffles showed at his throat and wrists. His plump face was healthfully rosy and wore a kindly smile. His brown eyes dwelt upon Hawthorne with a courtly interest as far from intrusive curiosity as from forbidding haughtiness.

Hawthorne addressed him in his best Castilian.

"Am I mistaken in supposing that this is the house of Don Vicente Mayorga?"

"I myself," said the Spaniard, with a bow, "am that Don Vicente Mayorga whom you name. In what manner may I serve you, Señor?"

"I am the bearer of letters of introduction," Hawthorne replied, "from Mr. Robert Ponsonby Staples, English Consul at Buenos Aires, from Don Nicholas Herrera, and from Don Ignacio Cisneros, of that city, from Don Luis Aldao and Don Pascual Echagüe of Santa Fé, from Don Francisco Candiotti, the Estanciero of Entre Rios, from Don Cayetano Martinez, and Don Esteban Maria Perrichon of Corrientes, and from others of your good friends."

The Spaniard bowed for the second time, a low bow.

"And by what name shall I address the friend of my friends, Señor?" he asked.

Hawthorne told him his name.

## CHAPTER II

### THE UNSPEAKABLE NAME

THE Spaniard bowed, even lower than before. "Do me the honor, Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "of entering my house, which is henceforth yours."

He led the way, not going into the *patio* itself, but turning to the right under the arcade. The first door, wide open like the street door, admitted them to a large room so dark that Hawthorne's eyes, still dazzled with the outdoor glare, could make out little of it. The three big windows facing him as he entered were so screened by their close-slatted *jalousies* that hardly more than a glimmer of outside daylight sifted through them. The two

windows on the courtyard side were similarly jalousied and were besides under the broad, low arcade. Most of the light in the room came from the open door, reflected from across the *patio*. A taper, to be sure, burned in a low-stemmed, broad-saucered silver candlestick on a big round table of dull-surfaced, blackish wood. But it gave little illumination.

His host unbuckled his sword and laid it, with his cane, on a chest by the wall. There were two inviting arm-chairs by the table and toward one of these he waved Hawthorne with a graceful gesture of his small white hand. From a pocket of his embroidered waistcoat he produced a gold snuff-box.

"Do you take snuff, Señor Don Guillermo?" he asked.

"With pleasure, Señor Don Vicente," Hawthorne replied, "and if I did not your exquisite *Princesa* would tempt even a novice to enjoy it."

"I see you are far from being a novice," Don Vicente smiled at him. "It requires an old hand to recognize *Princesa* before snuffing it."

"The best selected Brazilian snuff, such as you use, Señor Don Vicente," Hawthorne said, "makes itself apparent as soon as the box is opened."

"To connoisseurs like yourself, Señor Don Guillermo," the Spaniard replied. "But the generality of mankind cannot discern *Princesa* from common snuff."

"They are the losers," Hawthorne remarked sententiously.

"True," Don Vicente agreed, snapping the snuff-box and returning it to his waistcoat.

Hawthorne took a flat packet from an inner pocket of his sober brown coat. At sight of it Mayorga rose, and Hawthorne, similarly rising, presented the sheaf of letters. Both bowed. After they had reseated themselves the gold snuff-box again appeared, again both men partook of its contents. Don Vicente opened one of the letters. While he ran over them one by one, Hawthorne looked about him. His eyes were by this time accustomed to the grateful gloom. The ceiling and walls of the room were white-washed, its floor brick. There was little furniture besides the table and chairs, three or four chests, and a tall, locked cabinet. Hawthorne's eyes wandered to the door and re-

garded the red-brown sandstone of the pavement of the courtyard and the roughly rounded red sandstone pillars of its colonnade beyond. His host opened letter after letter, barely glancing through each; then he produced, from a capacious inner pocket, a large silver cigar-case, opened it, and offered it to Hawthorne, who took one of the big, blackish, blotchy Paraguayan cigars. Don Vicente took one himself, returned the case to his pocket, lifted the candle-stick from the table, held it to Hawthorne's cigar, lit his own, replaced the candle-stick, and settled himself back in his arm-chair.

"My house, Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "is at your disposal and all it contains is yours. View it at your leisure, select whichever of its rooms best suits you, put up as best you may, I beg of you, with our poor fare, and do me the favour to make here your abode while you honour 'Asuncion with your presence.'"

"The favour," said Hawthorne, "is all from you to me. Your house is a palace compared with anything I have seen in Paraguay. A stay here cannot be other than a delight. I know not how to thank you. I only wish I could do something to requite you for your kindness."

"You can requite any kindness I may be able to do you," said Don Vicente, "and requite it in full measure, if you can give authentic news of the Corsican. We are distracted by conflicting rumors. We hear that Ferdinand the Seventh is firmly established upon the throne of his ancestors, restored to the dominion of all Spain. Next we are told that the Corsican has returned to Paris, that he is again in possession of all France, of all Italy, even of Sicily, of all Spain, even of Cadiz; then we hear that he has been killed in a great battle; next that he has scattered his enemies, has once more captured Vienna, has Europe as before at his feet, and again is master of the world.

"Then we hear that he is a prisoner in England. What are we to believe? Do you know anything for certain?"

Hawthorne affirmed the final collapse of Napoleon's fortunes as he had to Dr. Parlett, but at much greater length. He also descanted upon the situation in Europe in general and in Spain in particular. He wound up by saying:

"The King of Spain, Señor Don Vicente, is assured the

peaceful possession of the throne of his ancestors. At least, he is exposed to no danger of further interference from France."

"You relieve me," Don Vicente sighed. "My king, who is no longer my king, is at least secure. You relieve me. Shall we have some *maté*? Do you relish our native beverage?"

"I do indeed," said Hawthorne enthusiastically. "If you wish it, let us have some by all means."

"Bopî," Don Vicente called, "*maté*."

A grunt from under the arcade outside the door was the only answer, but almost at once there appeared in the doorway a darkish mulatto boy, barefoot and bareheaded, clad in a white jacket, white shirt and white trousers. He carried a big silver tray on which was a tall silver urn, visibly steaming above and showing the blue flickering flame of a spirit lamp below. In front of it were two silver cups; tallish, two-handled, with slender stems like goblets and a goblet-like foot. Round the urn were ranged five silver bowls, the two largest empty, one of the smaller heaped with delicate, translucent cylindrical rolls of glittering white sugar, one with big, very light yellow lemons, and the smallest half full of a darkish grey powder, with a flat-handled silver spoon sticking in it. Between them were two flattish calabash-gourds, each with a silver handle attached to it by a band of silver round its middle. In the top of each was a round silver-rimmed hole about as big as a half dollar. On the tray, along with the bowls and calabashes, were two silver spoons, two silver knives, and two silver tubes, each about nine inches long, about as thick as a woman's little finger, beautifully carved, and expanded at one end into a flattish, roundish bulge, like the bowl of a spoon covered over, pierced above and below with a multitude of tiny holes.

"Shall Bopî prepare your *maté* for you, Señor Don Guillerme?" the Spaniard enquired, "or do you prefer to prepare it yourself, like most of us?"

"Myself, if it please you, Señor Don Vicente," Hawthorne replied.

"And do you prefer milk or lemon in it?" his host queried.

"Neither for me, Señor Don Vicente," Hawthorne an-



swered, "I think the flavor of the *yerba* too good to be spoiled by an addition."

"You are half a Paraguayan already," his host beamed at him. "For myself, give me lemon always. Pardon me if I speak Guarani to my servant."

Hawthorne bowed and Mayorga spoke some swift sentences to the mulatto, who, Hawthorne now perceived, had but one eye. The boy replied to his master by a word or two and left the room.

Don Vicente rose and moved his chair nearer the table, motioning his guest to do likewise. As they reseated themselves he waved his shapely right hand toward the tray and urn. Hawthorne took up one of the calabashes, ladled some spoonfuls of the dark powder into it, held it under the long, projecting spout of the urn and turned the agate-handled tap to let a very little boiling water run into the gourd. Then he picked up one of the silver tubes from the tray; with its flattened, expanded end he packed the moistened powder against one side of the hollow gourd, which he again held under the tap until it was nearly full of steaming water.

Holding the gourd in his right hand and eyeing it at short intervals he observed:

"I understood some of what you said to the boy. You told him that no milk was wanted and that he might go. The rest, and his answer, I did not catch."

"You are quick, Señor Don Guillermo," his host told him with a pleased smile, taking up the other calabash and proceeding as had his guest.

"You will be a complete Paraguayan in no time. It is well to know Guarani. It is the common language of the country. Few natives understand any Spanish. All Creoles speak Guarani in general and their Spanish is none too good. We Spaniards here resident use the native idiom daily, even among ourselves."

Hawthorne sniffed at the aperture in his calabash with an appreciative expression of anticipation. He leaned toward the tray, tilted the calabash slowly over one of the empty bowls and poured off most of the water, until some of the powder began to escape with it. He then dropped two of the small cylinders of sugar into the calabash and filled it a second time with water from the now furiously

steaming urn. His host looked on with approval painted all over him.

"You are an expert at preparing *yerba*," he remarked. "You already have learned to prefer a gourd to a silver cup and to pour off the first infusion. But take another *panal*, your *maté* will not be sweet enough."

"I do not like it too sweet," Hawthorne replied. "Two *panales* are sufficient for me."

He held the calabash in his left hand, slid his right hand inside the breast of his snuff-coloured coat and brought out a leather case about ten inches long. This he laid on his knee, deftly opened it with the fingers of his free hand, took out a silver tube like those on the tray, and returned the case to the pocket from which he had taken it.

"Ah," said Mayorga, as he decanted the first water from his gourd, dropped four *panales* into it and refilled it, "you are a lover of our *maté*; I see you carry your own *bombilla*."

"I take *maté* whenever I can," Hawthorne replied. "It is well to be ready."

"Do not wait for me," said his host, cutting a lemon. "Your *maté* will lose its warmth."

"I cannot drink it as boiling as you natives take it," Hawthorne told him with a smile. "I let it lose its first fury of heat."

Don Vicente smiled back at him and took up a *bombilla* from the tray. Each dipped his tube through the opening in his gourd and simultaneously they began to imbibe the steaming beverage through their *bombillas*.

Hawthorne freed his mouth from the tube almost instantly, his face beaming.

"This is indeed a treat," he exclaimed; "this is *caa cuys*, powdered leaf-buds, is it not? It is exquisite, unsurpassable."

"You are indeed an adept," Don Vicente replied, beaming in his turn. "Few foreigners ever attain such discrimination. Few Paraguayans can so much as tell *caa miri* from *caa guazu*."

"I barely relish the usual *caa guazu*," Hawthorne told him, "even a very little mid-rib left in with the leaves spoils the taste of *yerba* for me. The ordinary coarse-ground *yerba de polos* has little attraction for me. The

finer-ground *caa miri*, free from leaf-midribs, I like very much. But this infusion of young buds is the superior of all conceivable beverages. No drink can possibly surpass it. I have tasted it but once before, at the parsonage at Neembucú, where the curate entertained me."

"Pai Acatú is said to have a pretty taste for all sorts of eating and drinking," Don Vicente remarked. "No doubt he exceeded himself for a foreigner."

"A most agreeable ecclesiastic and a charming host," Hawthorne assented. "But your *caa cuys* is better than his."

The Spaniard bowed and they fell again to enjoying their *maté*. So occupied, each had leisure to look the other over.

Mayorga saw a tall, well-built man who looked both young and mature and might have been any age between twenty-two and thirty-eight. He had a long, roundish head, with curly yellow hair, snappy grey-blue eyes, and a nose so hooked that his profile had indeed a resemblance to that of the victor of Waterloo, as Dr. Parlett had remarked to him. The firmness and determination of his lips and chin also gave that part of his face a certain resemblance to Wellington's, although the features themselves were more graceful and less harsh in outline. He had the air, as his face had the expression, of a man who knew exactly what he meant to say and do. There was none of the repulsion of self-assertion about him, but rather the charm of a manly self-reliance and a boyish self-confidence underlying a modest and warm-hearted attitude of sympathetic consideration for others. His movements had the cat-like grace and deliberation of a man capable of lightning quickness and conscious of a superfluity of physical strength.

Hawthorne saw in the Spaniard a man passing from easy and prosperous middle life towards a green old age, a well-fed and healthy man, ruddy of face, his hair untouched by any thread of grey, his brown eyes clear and bright, his lips red over big white teeth, his body round and full as his face. He was plainly of the unmixed blue blood, for he had not only the unacquirable presence of a grandee, but the amazingly small feet and hands seen only in personages of old family and long lineage.

Sipping their steaming drink the two men regarded each other.

Presently Mayorga said:

"Pardon me, Señor Don Guillermo, if I touch upon a delicate subject. But I cannot help wondering how it comes that a citizen of the United States of North America is so warmly and almost officially recommended by a consul of the English King. Are not the two nations at war?"

As to Dr. Parlett, so to his host Hawthorne explained about the treaty, the belated news of it, the battle of New Orleans, the various naval engagements and the now universal peace. He ended by praising Mr. Robert Ponsonby Staples in particular, and English Consuls in general.

"Where my country has no representatives," he said, "they frequently care for travellers of my nationality."

"You are, I believe," the Spaniard observed, "the first of that nationality to visit Asuncion. May I enquire what has led you to visit Paraguay?"

"I," said Hawthorne, "like many of my countrymen, am inclined toward profit-getting through trade-ventures. In search of an opportunity to make a fortune through trade I roam about the world. But I am also an ardent apostle of true liberty."

"Señor Don Guillermo," his host interrupted, extending a plump, deprecating hand, "choose your words more carefully, I beg of you."

"I am not only an apostle of liberty," Hawthorne went on, "I have fought for liberty, risking my life in more than one part of this continent; I was with Bolivar at Cartagena and at Pamplona; I was in Caracas four years ago at the time of the earthquake. But it appeared to me that those men talk of liberty but fight for the mere sake of fighting. I left them in disgust. I was with San Martin at Cuyo. I was with both Posadas and Alvear at Buenos Aires. But it seems to me that these men too merely aim at liberty, and are incapable of it. I was about to leave South America when I was seized with interest in Paraguay. I heard strange rumours, conflicting in many things, agreeing in a few."

"Señor Don Guillermo," Mayorga again interrupted with a protesting gesture. "Be cautious, I beg of you."

"All these stories," Hawthorne continued imperturbably, "agreed as to the people of Paraguay being simple

and frugal, gentle and brave; capable of protecting themselves from outside interference, as Belgrano felt five years ago; peaceable and incapable of such disorders as Artigas keeps up throughout the Banda Oriental; eager for liberty but dominated by a dictator."

"Señor Don Guillermo," Mayorga exclaimed. "Be advised, be prudent."

"Of this dictator," Hawthorne proceeded calmly, "I heard uniformly that he was a man of rare character and attainments, of great force of personality and of great capacity, a born ruler in every respect. Otherwise the rumours were irreconcilable; that he was ruling in the name of Charles the Fourth, holding his abdication invalid and proclaiming him the only legitimate King of Spain; that he was ruling in the name of King Ferdinand the Seventh, hoping for a restoration of Spanish power throughout the Intendencia; that he was governing in the name of the dowager Queen of Portugal; that he was negotiating with Emperor Dom Pedro for a union of Paraguay with Brazil or its absorption by Brazil; that he had put himself under the direction of the remains of the Jesuits and governed in their name; that he had set up a certain Don Galicien le Fort, as Marquis of the Guaranies, and hereditary ruler of an independent Paraguay; that he had abdicated in favour of a *junta* and was acting nominally as their generalissimo. But all these contradictory rumours agreed in representing him as a stern oppressor, as a grim and relentless tyrant."

"Señor Don Guillermo," cried Mayorga, laying his *maté* gourd on the silver tray with a clatter, "Señor Don Guillermo, I implore you. Take care!"

"Your agitation, Señor Don Vicente," Hawthorne placidly replied, "seems to confirm me in the general impression derived from the rumours. It strengthens my purpose. Know then that I have come to Asuncion because I heard that it and its neighbouring regions are in the grip of a cruel and remorseless despot, that no land is more truly deprived of liberty, that no people is more truly oppressed. I have come to discover whether any love of freedom exists in any part of Paraguay's population, to arouse that spark of aspiration, if such a spark there be; to foment it, to lead toward freedom any who long for

freedom, in short to satisfy myself whether he deserves it and if so to compass the overthrow of Dr. Francia."

"*Dios!* Señor Don Guillermo!" Mayorga exclaimed, fairly springing from his chair and laying his plump white hands on the shoulders of the unmoved young man. "Speak lower! Some one might hear! Bopî might hear! If you are reckless of your own life, if you are even resolved upon self destruction, consider, I beg of you, my wife and children, consider myself. You will involve my family with myself in your ruin."

The American's eye kindled with a keen and sparkling brightness; his nostrils curled, his face glowed with animation.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "I have found my predestined field at last! You make me sure! No men on earth are more resentful of oppression than you Spaniards of the pure blood; no men alive are braver, and I see in you not only indignation, rage, and impotent hate, but I see terror. You are afraid. Pardon me, Señor Don Vicente, but you dread this man. Take courage. I am with you. From us two shall spread the wave of resistance which shall overwhelm the despot, which shall restore liberty to Paraguay and bring destruction upon Dr. Francia."

"*Por el amor de dios*, Señor Don Guillermo," Mayorga cried, wringing his hands. "Do not speak that name."

"I met a man on the street," Hawthorne said, "who told me the same thing. He said he was a Dr. Parlett, an English surgeon. He seemed nearly as wrought up as you are. But he was scarcely sober and I thought him foolish or amusing himself with me. His statements tallied, however, with those of Pai Acatú at Neembucú."

"Don Tomas," said Mayorga, "is a sensible man, however much wine he may have drunk. Pai Acatú is a sensible man."

"Do you really fear this upstart tyrant so much," Hawthorne drawled, "that you even shrink from uttering his name?"

"With reason," Mayorga gasped. "With reason, Señor Don Guillermo. No sooner was he established as Supreme Dictator than he changed his former easy-going manners, accentuated his reserve into a cold and forbidding haughtiness. He allowed no one to address him, like the rest of

us, as '*Usia.*' He must be addressed as '*Excelentísimo Señor.*' And he allowed no one to speak of him any longer as before; he promulgated a decree that he must be referred to or spoken of only as '*El Supremo.*' We scarcely took the decree seriously; we regarded it as applying to negroes and mulattoes, to half-breeds, Guaranies and other Indians, who already so addressed him and so spoke of him of their own accord. We were cruelly and suddenly undeceived.

"A young man named Ramon Perez, of good family, though poor, while chatting in the market-square, spoke of the Dictator by his name. It was reported to him. He ordered him arrested and had him confined in the general prison. An imprudent gentleman, Don Cristobal de Maria, ventured to remonstrate with the Dictator for his harshness.

"'What!' said the Dictator, 'you think that to speak of the Dictator of Paraguay familiarly and without respect does not deserve imprisonment? To prison you go yourself!'

"And Don Cristobal is now in the public prison, herded with criminals and ruffians.

"One of our foremost citizens, Don José Carisimo, second assessor of the customs, an intimate of the Dictator's since both were boys, a man of the most scrupulous politeness, while talking to him inadvertently slipped back into natural utterance and said '*Usia.*' Instantly the Dictator turned his back on him. Don José left the Government House in chagrin. That night the Dictator's assistant secretary, Don Andres Villarino, came secretly to Don José at his home and informed him that the Dictator was so incensed that it would not be safe for him ever to approach him again. The next morning early Don José dispatched a servant with a formal resignation of his office of Assessor. Before noon he heard, as we all heard, the fife and drum pass his house, as they passed every house of importance in the city: he heard read from the street corner, as we all heard from some corner or other, the decree that whoever spoke of or addressed the Dictator otherwise than according to law would be shot.

"Since then few men have dared to speak to Don José or to salute him; fewer have dared to call on him. He lives almost as a hermit, afraid to venture abroad lest he suffer

slights or bring misfortune upon his faithful friends. Only two or three of us in the city risk the Dictator's displeasure by treating Don José precisely as before; only two or three of the country gentry are so venturesome."

"This seems to me," said Hawthorne, "a peevish and childish kind of vindictiveness."

"Do not dare to say so to any one, Don Guillermo," Mayorga told him. "It might be reported. And be careful to speak of the Dictator as 'El Supremo.' Doubtless I have conveyed to you that Don Tomas was not talking at random or from inebriety."

"It begins to dawn on me," Hawthorne admitted, half whimsically, half ruefully. "But what I cannot comprehend, Señor Don Vicente, is why you submit to the tyranny of such a man."

"If there were nothing of him, Señor Don Guillermo," Mayorga replied, "except his spitefulness and bad temper, if all the rest of his character were in consonance with his outbursts of vindictiveness, his domination would not be long or would never have come to pass. But he is not wholly such as his worst would lead you to think. He has a complicated and wonderful individuality and chiefly he is amazingly competent."

"Señor Don Vicente," said Hawthorne, "even before I came he was not the only competent man in Paraguay."

"Perhaps not," his host allowed. "But he has control of all the cannon, of all the ammunition in the country."

"What are powder, shot and guns," Hawthorne demanded, "against men?"

"Ah, Señor Don Guillermo," his host replied. "He has men too. We Spaniards are few, very few. There are not a thousand of us, men, women and children, in all Paraguay. Of Creoles of the pure blood there are not ten thousand. Only we Spaniards and some few Creoles are opposed to the Dictator. Most of the Creoles are with him and approve of him and all he does. The hundred thousand *mestizoes*, half-breeds and mixed bloods, the hundred thousand Guaranies and other Christian Indians, the almost negligible ten thousand negroes, mulattoes, quadroons and octoroons are all alike devoted to him, body and soul. Taken altogether they are twenty or more to every one of us. And they are not merely unanimously devoted to our



ruler, they not only idolise him personally, but their adoration is strengthened by a fanatical superstition. We were indeed helpless when we voted him supreme Dictator and were entrapped into doing so. But we were also deceived. We did not foresee the consequences of the wording of his title. The Guarani equivalent for *Supremo* is a term belonging to the language of their ancient paganism, a term used by the missionaries only of the Most High. The *mestizoes* half credit and the Indians wholly believe that by vote, by legislation, by enactment, this man has been made omnipotent. Nothing can shake this faith, much less uproot it. This superstition is of his wily devising, the product of his crafty foresight. Upon ourselves we welded this shackle, as it were *grillos* upon our ankles. Well does he know that it is his chief strength and astutely does he use it against us."

Hawthorne was about to reply when the door darkened. Bopî appeared and spoke some words in Guarani.

"It appears, Señor Don Guillermo," said his host, "that dinner-time is approaching. I will show you the room which has been prepared for you, which I trust will please you."

### CHAPTER III

#### IMPROMPTUS AND PELOTTAS

HAWTHORNE followed his host across the *patio*. There he was shown into another room, almost as large and not quite so dim as the room from which he had come. The floor also was of red brick, browned by continual rubbing and smoothed to almost a polished surface. In the middle of the room was a heavy and solid table of dark wood. In one corner was a small bed, a very small bed. Its counterpane was of crimson damask; the turned-over edge of the sheet of a cambric so fine as to be almost transparent to the glow of the coverlet. Its pillow-cases were of delicate embroidered lawn. Across the opposite corner was swung a very large hammock, deeply fringed along both sides; hammock and fringe alike of a staring pattern of contrasted blue and yellow, primitive and barbaric, but astonishingly pleasing in effect.

There were two rush-bottomed chairs, a sort of stool or low stand, leather-covered, and not a trace of other furniture in the big, white-washed apartment. The jalousies of split cane let some light filter through from the outer glare.

"We shall have to try to make you comfortable without your effects, Señor Don Guillermo," Mayorga said. "My servants have not yet fetched your boxes."

"My boxes?" Hawthorne exclaimed questioningly.

"Precisely," Mayorga explained. "Few vessels reach Asuncion. There could be no doubt as to that which brought you, nor as to its owner. When I spoke to Bopí, part of what you did not catch was an order sent to Señor Isasi's warehouse for your possessions. Don Meliton is my good friend. By this time your property is in my servant's hands and on its way here; meanwhile we shall have to do our best without your possessions. When you have washed we shall have dinner."

A mulatto woman, bare-foot, bare-armed, clad (apparently clad only) in a loose gown of white cotton homespun, loosely belted at the waist, entered the room, carrying a large silver basin balanced on her left hand, and a handsome silver ewer in her right. She extended the bowl towards Hawthorne. He comprehendingly stretched his hands and she poured water from the pitcher. He looked about for a towel. Without setting down the pitcher or basin she twisted herself sideways towards him, her elbow crooked outward. Hanging from it he saw, almost trailing to the floor, a greyish scarf, exquisitely delicate and beautifully fringed at the ends, with fine lace-work finishing a band of rich embroidery.

Hawthorne hesitated.

"Is this really a towel?" he asked.

"Such are our Paraguayan towels, Señor Don Guillermo," Mayorga answered, his tone somewhat nettled.

Hawthorne, drying his hands, remarked:

"I have seen scarfs far less fine and handsome than this readily sold in Boston for fifty dollars, which is fifty piastres. In Philadelphia one might fetch half as much again."

His host looked both mollified and amused.

"Doubtless, Señor Don Guillermo," he replied, "you have in your Philadelphia and Boston articles scarcely

valued there for which we at Asuncion would eagerly offer as much as a hundred piastres. You may even have such things unregarded in your boxes, which I trust you will find in this room when you return for your siesta after dinner."

Crossing the court again Hawthorne followed his host to a room on the left of the entrance-archway, a room that seemed immense. Like the others, it was dim, little light coming through the jalousies, and not much through the door opening under the arcade into the *patio*. By this light Hawthorne made out a table, its legs like clumsy posts, showing under the deep-tasselled fringe of the heavily embroidered native cotton cloth that covered its vast expanse of top. On the table were two open-work silver trays loaded with the native bread, made of maize or manioc, and called *chipá*, and a huge silver platter of smoking, steaming, almost boiling *olla podrida*, flanked by four sparkling crystal carafes of clear water, one toward each corner of the table, which was set with fully eighteen covers; entirely of silver, not only the spoons and forks, but also the knife-handles, plates and dishes.

Beyond the table, facing him, stood a formidably large family group, whom Hawthorne had seen rise as he entered the door. He was presented in Spanish as the *Ingles del America del Norte*, the Englishman from North America. In turn he met Doña Engracia Mayorga, his host's wife; Doña Gertrudis Balaguer and Doña Inez Romero, his sisters, their husbands, Don Arturo Balaguer and Don Gil Romero, and Mayorga's sons, Don Carmelo and Don Rafael, his daughters, Señoritas Carlota and Leite Mayorga.

"And these, Señor Don Guillermo," his host wound up, waving his hand to the group of children, half in the background, "are the rest of my children with my sisters' children."

The six or seven indicated stood by a side table, upon which were silver trays piled with watermelons, muskmelons and oranges; and epergnes, also of silver, loaded with bananas, lemons, peaches and fruits which Hawthorne did not know.

The children made a pretty group, grave and shy, but self-possessed. The girls were garbed, like their mothers,

in simple white cotton gowns such as Hawthorne had seen on every woman he had encountered since he reached Asunción. The only difference was that on a child the *tupoi* was belted by a gay silk sash, while their elders wore parti-colored embroidered girdles. The sole distinction between the garb of the women he had seen on his way from the harbour-side and the attire of the ladies was, apparently, that for the women of the commonalty, the *tupoi* was their only garment, while their betters wore some light under-clothing. Hawthorne realized that he was in a corsetless world where social inequality made little difference in dress. The gowns of these refined gentry were scarcely finer than the *tupoi* of the octoroon girl he had passed on the street or of the mulatto girl who had acted as human towel-rack for him.

The boys, like the men, wore long-tailed, huge-flapped, vast-pocketed, many-buttoned coats of the extravagant cut exhibited by that of the head of the family. All the boys were handsome, every girl lovely.

So for that matter were the elder women. All had black hair and brown eyes, fine, lustrous brown eyes. The señoritas were beauties, the matrons noble and personable ladies.

The greetings and compliments over, Doña Engracia indicated they were to take their places at the table. It was fenced in, one might almost say palisaded, by the stiff, straight backs of the leather-bottomed chairs, the carved finials of whose uprights stood full five feet from the floor.

Then, to Hawthorne's amazement, the gathering undressed for dinner. The ladies drew the loose kerchiefs from about their necks and handed them to the servants, five or six of whom had entered the room behind Hawthorne and his host. These also took the big coats, and long, crimson, green or blue embroidered waist-coats of the men and boys, who at once threw open the necks and rolled up to their elbows the cambric sleeves of their befrilled, belaced and embroidered shirts.

As Hawthorne, imitating his hosts, handed his outer garments to an attendant, he perceived with something of a start that she was a mulatto girl of about fourteen, entirely without clothing.

He glanced about.

His eyes by this time were entirely used to the gloom.

The waiters, boys and girls all, and all mulattoes, had not a thread of clothing among the eight of them.

This, he perceived at once, was evidently the custom of Asuncion. For Miss Leite and Miss Carlota, between whom he was seated, noticed the saddle-coloured skins of their servitors no more than if they had been clad like themselves or the five nurse girls, who, each carrying a small child, had stood in a group in one corner.

These, after the family were seated at table, carried their charges out of the room, one baby squalling vigorously as it lost sight of its mother.

Everybody was helped to a share of the *olla podrida* and for a time the silence was broken only by faint sounds of eating, punctuated by clickings of spoons or forks.

The servants stood or loitered about the room, barefoot and noiseless, until the *olla* had nearly vanished. Then they languidly removed the plates and platters. Don Vicente explained to his family that their guest, Don Guillermo Atorno, was a friend of Don Francisco Candiotti, and was, moreover, of special interest as being the first native of North America who had ever visited Asuncion. Don Arturo, a very plump, youngish man, with curly black hair and sleepy, humorous eyes looking out of a handsome placid face, asked civilly about the health and prosperity of Don Francisco Candiotti. Hawthorne assured him that Don Francisco was as well and vigorous as possible and as incredibly prosperous as ever.

"Does he still convoy his yearly product of mules to Potosí," Don Arturo enquired, "or has he come to entrust it to one of his sons?"

"He went himself last year," Hawthorne answered, "and I heard him remark that he was preparing to go with the next batch."

"Four thousand mules a year still?" Don Arturo queried.

"Six thousand last year," Hawthorne informed him, "and five hundred bullocks."

"Then perhaps his yearly increase of property," Don Vicente put in, "amounts now to four new *estancias* instead of three as of old."

"He bought five new estates last year with his profits," Hawthorne replied, "and showed me in the course of our

rides together five or six which he meant to purchase next year."

"He still goes by Santiago, Tucuman and Salta?" Don Arturo suggested, ruminatingly.

"So I believe I was told," Hawthorne answered.

"Still keeps his men awake?" Don Arturo pursued.

"And himself," Hawthorne returned.

"Ah," Don Vicente beamed, "my good friend Candioti clings still to his pet fiction, I conjecture, that he never sleeps?"

"I was told," Hawthorne confirmed, "that no one had ever seen him asleep, that he occupies at night when at home a room entirely to himself, without any bed, and that no one, servant, son or friend, had ever caught him unconscious or so much as seen him in his hammock."

Don Vicente smiled and shook his handsome head.

"The foibles of men!" he commented. "Fancy so simple and direct a soul as Don Francisco nursing and cherishing so transparent a fable."

Don Gil, a small and very dapper man, his stubby black hair standing erect like bristles of a brush, his eyebrows mere lines of jet below his shining forehead, then remarked:

"We question Don Guillermo about our great *estanciero* of whom we hear as often, sometimes, as every six or seven months; we ask him nothing of his own country, of which none of us has ever heard so much as a word beyond its name."

At this point two big mulatto slaves, barefoot, clad in loose shirts and trousers of white cotton homespun, bore in and set upon the table a huge roast, fully thirty pounds in weight, of *carne con cuero*, ribs of beef wrapped up and tightly sewn in an adherent flap of hide. So roasted the newly-killed beef was extraordinarily juicy, tender and savoury. While it was being divided and allotted, Hawthorne was subjected to a bombardment of questions about his native land. Don Gil was astonished to hear that George Washington was dead, more astonished to learn that he had been dead fifteen years. Don Arturo was amazed when assured that Philadelphia had eighty thousand inhabitants, New York sixty thousand, and Boston twenty-five thousand.

"What!" he exclaimed, "a city eight times as great as Asuncion; another six times as great and a third with ten times as many persons as we have families! Yours is indeed a great nation, Señor Don Guillermo!"

The interest of the ladies was aroused by these strange and unexpected pieces of information about an almost legendary land. Doña Engracia enquired about spinning and weaving and was fascinated, incredulous and enchanted at Hawthorne's account of the cotton-gin, which appeared to her a miracle equally incredible and delightful. Doña Gertrudis put questions about women's dress and was plainly scandalized when told that women wore bonnets in church. Doña Inez asked about cooking and was rapt into dreamy ecstasy while hearing of succotash, clam-bakes, planked shad, scrapple, terrapin stew, pumpkin pies, egg-nog and cream ices.

Meanwhile the beef had been removed and the family had done full justice to the third course of roast and boiled fowls, pigeons, partridges and several hashes and stews, unrecognisable to Hawthorne, who, already replete with *olla* and beef, had even after his months of voyaging less appetite than his indolent, home-keeping hosts.

He had noticed an empty chair, and now, in the midst of this languidly consumed superabundance, there entered a tall, broad-shouldered young man, very hot and perspiring profusely.

"It is true——" he began, when Don Vicente cut him off.

"We have a guest, my son," he said reprovingly, and the big youth instantly stood silent.

Hawthorne rose and was presented to

"Don Desiderio Mayorga, my eldest son, henceforth your very good friend, Señor Don Guillermo."

Don Desiderio, in spite of the glow of heat he was in, was deadly pale all over his swarthy countenance. His greeting to Hawthorne was gracious in words, but constrained in tone. His voice shook, almost broke; his lips twitched; he was plainly labouring under great excitement. He sweated even in the cool gloom, and wrenched himself free of his soaked and clinging blue coat and scarlet vest, as the mulatto boy helped him off with them. Pantingly he unhooked his sword-belt and handed it to the boy, pantingly,

he rolled up his almost dripping shirt-sleeves and opened the throat of his draggled shirt.

"May I speak, father?" he enquired.

"Don Guillermo," Mayorga replied, "is a friend of Don Nicolas Herrera, of Don Pascual Echagüe of Santa Fé, of Don Estéban Maria Perrichon, of Don Francisco Candioti. He is our friend. He is one of ourselves. You may speak as to me alone. But first be seated, cool yourself with a draft of water, refresh yourself with wine. Be calm. Let us all be calm."

Don Desiderio seated himself, gulped a mouthful of wine, swallowed a tall goblet of water, and wiped his forehead.

All eyes were on him.

No one spoke.

Hawthorne could hear the dissonant breathing of the men. He almost fancied he could hear the thumping hearts of the beautiful girls on either side of him.

"It is true," Don Desiderio began. "Alberto has been recaptured. It was he whom the lancers conducted past this house: he, that starved and dusty scarecrow crucified and chained to a jolting mule. The lancers took him into the *patio* of the Cabildo. From Villarino's office I myself saw Zorilla standing over him while his men riveted a *barra de grillos* on his ankles. He is in the middle cell of the second row of dungeons under the cavalry barrack."

"Oh, for the blood!—" Don Gil burst out.

"Silence, *Cuñado*," Don Vicente interrupted almost sternly. "Say nothing rash. Folly is no friend at the best of times; now we need all our wisdom."

"How did you succeed in getting so near?" Don Arturo queried.

"I pretended business with Villarino," Don Desiderio replied. "He is everybody's friend and will say nothing."

"Did you learn anything additional?" his father questioned him.

"Only that he was captured near Yuty," Don Desiderio answered.

"Fifty leagues," Doña Engracia half whispered. "Bareback on a mule, in chains, poor lad!"

Her lovely eyes were full of tears.

"You must know, Señor Don Guillermo," his host explained, "that we are concerned about two young gentle-



men of Corrientes, Don Alberto Chilaber and his brother Don Diego. They are of good family and property. As they were left orphans when very young, they have no relations nearer than their godfather, Don Pascual Echagüe, of this city, cousin of that Don Pascual Echagüe whom you met in Santa Fé. These young brothers embarked in trade in Corrientes and considerably augmented their patrimony, for they were known to be favoured by General Artigas, and therefore whenever his troops captured and sacked Corrientes, which has happened about four times a year, his officers protected the Chilaber house and warehouses. Their property thus suffered no losses by war and they were capable merchants.

"About six months ago they decided to return to Asuncion. The very morning on which they arrived here they had some difficulty with the custom-house inspectors. The elder, Don Alberto, remained on the quay with their goods, the younger, Don Diego, went to the Government House to ask an audience with the Dictator. He was ushered into the Dictator's library. Hardly had a moment passed when the Dictator summoned his guards, bade them seize Don Diego, accusing him of intending to assassinate him, and ordered him thrown into one of the cells under the guard house, where he has ever since been confined. As soon as a guard could reach the landing-stairs Don Alberto was also arrested and confined in the general prison. Their property was confiscated.

"Don Alberto escaped from the *cuartel* two months ago and we hoped he had made good his escape to Candelaria or Itaty by this time. We behold him brought back, and learn that he is in fetters in an underground cell beside his brother. Can you wonder that we are grieved?"

"I cannot," Hawthorne declared, "and I do not. Was neither tried? Were they given no opportunity to defend themselves, to reply to the witnesses or meet the evidence against them? Was no judgment passed on them?"

"Alas!" Don Vicente gloomed, "you speak of the customs of a vanished epoch or of another world. Our Dictator's order to arrest is the only judgment now passed in Paraguay; his suspicion the only evidence and the only witness necessary; his silent thought the only trial any man

now has. All this may be for the best, as many good men say sincerely, but of a certainty it is true."

Hawthorne did not reply; a miserable silence settled over the table.

Don Vicente made an effort.

"We forget ourselves," he said. "We have a guest. We must not annoy him with our troubles. We are hungry" (Hawthorne, even in the midst of his sympathy, marvelled at people who could be hungry after such portentous feeding). "We have an abundance of the best; let us put aside our griefs and enjoy the good gifts of a bountiful God. Let us eat and be cheerful."

They attempted to obey; all attempted to obey. The servants brought *olla*, beef, fowl, pigeon, partridge and stews for Don Desiderio, who indeed managed to swallow some mouthfuls, which plainly revolted him. The rest made an attempt at conversation, which subsided into whispered dialogues and died away in monosyllables.

Hawthorne had had leisure to observe his neighbours. They were as alike as twins, sleek black hair, serene, smooth foreheads, pencilled black brows, big, melting brown eyes, long black lashes, warm, clear-brown cheeks, ruddy and plump; small ears set far back and low, little rose-bud mouths curved and pouting, the upper lips almost too curled and short; chins round and full.

While their elders talked he had had no chance to address them.

Now in the half silence he ventured to remark, whether to Miss Leite or Miss Carlota he could not guess, that undressing for dinner was as delightful as novel to him.

"Yes," she placidly rejoined. "We always undress for dinner here, except when a south-east gale is blowing. We women have an easier time than the men, our clothes are so much lighter. But gentlemen's coats are such fearfully big and heavy affairs. No one could eat *olla* this weather with a coat and waistcoat on. He would suffocate. Opened collars and sleeves rolled up must be a great relief, too. We are always glad to get rid of our kerchiefs."

Hawthorne surveyed the soft, round throat, bosom bare to the simple narrow satin ribbon that confined the low neck of the white gown, the unperturbed maiden breast rising and falling with the señorita's even breathing; and,

admiring her looks, admired even more her self-possession and her complete naturalness.

He looked to the other side.

"Carlota really wants to ask you about girls in your country," Señorita Leite remarked, obligingly and tactfully putting him right as to names. "Are they like us?"

"Seldom so pretty," Hawthorne blurted out, before he thought.

The placid maidens took the compliment unruffled.

Then, to Hawthorne's astonishment, in the most matter-of-fact tone, Carlota declaimed:

"Poor Desiderio is so distressed  
He cannot eat. He's wretched and depressed.  
I'll wake him up and stir up all the rest."

She broke off a morsel from the piece of *chipá* bread by her plate and began to roll it into a pellet.

Leite did the like, declaiming in similar even tones:

"Poor Brother, he is not the only one,  
We're all distracted. Something must be done.  
Let's flip him on the ear and start some fun."

Carlota, eyeing the pellet she was rolling between her thumb and finger, instantly replied:

"A stinging ear is sure to disconcert him,  
And that's the very best way to divert him.  
He will get angry but that will not hurt him."

She had completed to her satisfaction the little ball and dexterously flipped it from her thumb and finger so that it flew across the table and hit her brother on the lobe of his right ear. Instantly, as it were, automatically, he began to roll a bread-pellet, remarking:

"You think you're smart to give my ear a whack,  
As if nobody else could have the knack.  
I'll make your ear smart when I hit you back."

The pellet went wide and struck Rafael, sitting next to Carlota. He retorted in kind, Carlota, who had been aimed

at, flipping a pellet at the same instant. As each unintentional hit drew a new participant into the game the bread-bullets flew in all directions across the table. Everybody, from Miss Leite to her stately father, joined in. Desiderio really began to eat, as much as he could for rolling, aiming and dodging. Giggles greeted each bad shot, applause each hit. In a few moments the whole family was in a gale of merriment, the Chilabers appeared forgotten, everybody pelted everybody else, and the room was filled with a hail of pellets through which Don Vicente declaimed:

"We must remember that we have a guest with us,  
It don't seem fair to put him to the test with us,  
But he'll get hit by and by like all the rest with us."

This concentrated the attention of the company on Hawthorne.

Don Gil Romero and Don Arturo Balaguer turned their artillery on him, in a spirit of disarming good-fellowship.

Both missed, starting a tornado of jeers, but Doña Inez Romero, roguishly smiling at him, hit Hawthorne fair under the eye.

A gust of laughter applauded the hit and all shouted. "You must retort, Don Guillermo. You must join in. You must hit her in return. Show him, Carlota."

And Doña Inez Romero declaimed:

"It's graceful of you not to make a fuss  
Or be displeased or argue or discuss,  
Just try to hit me back—be one of us."

Hawthorne, by no means averse to that part of his lesson, found himself intent upon the fairy fingers demonstrating how to roll a "*pelotita*" and how to impel one.

The rolling Hawthorne found easy and the shooting much like playing marbles, the positions of fingers and thumb as in that game with similar variations.

But to impel a *pelotita* at charming Doña Inez Romero, who had hit him, though she smiled coquettishly at him, Hawthorne found anything but easy to attempt. To shy a bread pellet at a lovely lady seated by her husband was,

contrary to all his New England ideas of propriety. The whole table, however, laughed, applauded and encouraged him, until he made the effort. He tried his best to miss her, but hit her on her tiny ear, just above the pearl earring.

The applause fairly deafened him and shouts arose of: "A verse, a verse, too! Be one of us all round!"

And Doña Encarnacion declaimed:

"You hit a matron with your maiden shy,  
Come make a verse, you only have to try,  
You'll do it just as easily as I."

Hawthorne, struggling between the feeling that it ought to be easy and that it was impossible, began:

"A foreigner can't hope to rhyme in Spanish——"

There he stuck; crimson.

Don Arturo placidly completed the stanza for him.

"But if his bashfulness he could but banish,  
All difficulties would that instant vanish."

"We'll let you off with one-third of a verse and consider that enough," Doña Encarnacion reassured him. "Now you are one of us."

"Now you are one of us," they all shouted and made him the target of a fusillade to which he responded hesitatingly until Doña Gertrudis hit him stingingly on the nose. Then he really aimed at his tormentors and scored some hits which were greeted with shouts of applause and gales of laughter. All were as gay as if the Chilabers had never existed; as if dictatorships and oppression were non-existent.

"I don't understand," Hawthorne remarked, "how you can make verses so quickly. You must be the most wonderful family on earth."

Miss Leite instantly replied:

"In a grand match we'd hardly come out winners,  
For all Asuncion families, saints and sinners,  
Can make up offhand verses at their dinners."

"Is the faculty so general?" Hawthorne exclaimed.

"Universal," Carlota declared.

And from across the table Doña Gertrudis, overhearing, declaimed:

"It may have started at the tower of Babel,  
At any rate all Spanish folk are able  
To bandy little rhymes like these at table."

When the fish, served last, according to Spanish custom, was brought in, all attacked it with avidity. Even Hawthorne, surfeited as he had thought himself, found his relish revive at the mere sight of a huge and magnificent *pacú*, as they called it, a kind of turbot, fully a yard long, broiled brown and exhaling a most appetizing savour.

All partook as if they had not had a mouthful before and ate amid a hail of *pelotitas*, which flew about until the floor was not merely peppered with them, but actually, square yards of it, hidden under them.

When the fruit, tarts, candied sweetmeats, silver pitchers of milk, little bowls of honey and platters of new cheese were set on the table their welcome was rather languid. The bombardment ebbed. The girl waiters each brought a basin and towel. All dipped their fingers into a basin and rinsed and dried their hands.

Then the cigars were brought. These woke the company to renewed interest. Everybody took one except the señoritas, and, when the taper was passed around, everybody smoked. Hawthorne was dumbfounded to behold not only the stately Doña Engracia and winsome Doña Gertrudis, but even pretty Doña Inez, puffing long, even enormous, cigars. They puffed serenely. He acknowledged to himself the perfection of the mild, sweet tobacco, but it seemed to him a profanation for ladies to smoke, especially to smoke such gigantic cheroots, while the men, like himself, were provided with cigars of very moderate proportions. He was uneasy in spite of himself and asked Miss Carlota:

"Why are the ladies' cigars so much larger than these we have?"

"Oh," Carlota replied, "we like them better that way."

"But you do not smoke!" he exclaimed.

"Not in company," the little lady rejoined sedately. "We are not allowed to smoke yet except in our own rooms. But we always smoke before our siesta, sometimes two or three cigars, just like mother's."

Hawthorne felt inwardly shocked. He could not imagine the big, coarse, blotchy cylinders between those pearly teeth, separating those ruby lips, distorting those tiny, cupid's bow mouths.

To him, even the elder ladies appeared, as it were, desecrated by their smoking.

They not only smoked, but with elbows on the table, universally selected toothpicks from one or the other of the several glasses holding supplies of carefully cut wooden splints, all calmly and leisurely picked their teeth. Even so employed, listless, lolling, monosyllabic, Señoritas Leite and Carlota were charming and unquestionably aristocratic.

Aristocratic even in the yawns, which grew more frequent until Doña Engracia rose and remarked that everybody would be better after a siesta.

## CHAPTER IV

### WARNINGS

HAWTHORNE found in his room the same mulatto woman who had brought him the water and towel before dinner. He was amazed to see, set, spread out or piled up on his table, goblets, three bottles of spirits and six of wine, a bowl of glittering *panales*, another of lemons, a carafe of water, a tray of biscuits, two of fruit, and a box of cigars. The idea of eating anything after such a superabundant feast staggered him.

He was pleased to find his battered hair trunks, hide catch-alls, raw-hide bales, and plank boxes carefully bestowed along one wall.

The woman motioned toward the hammock. Hawthorne disposed himself in it. She then placed in his hand a broad, red silk ribbon, went out and shut the door.

Hawthorne saw that the ribbon was fastened to a ring-

bolt in the white-washed wall. He comprehended. Settling himself in the knotless, broad-meshed hammock, adjusting his head on the cool, grass-cloth-covered pillow, he tugged gently at the ribbon, tugged rhythmically, swung at each pull softly in a wider and wider arc; pulled in a drowse, in a dream, and so fell asleep.

When he woke he was naturally very thirsty. After a long draft of water from the carafe he turned to the silver basin set on the leather-covered stool, with the silver pitcher on the floor between that and a big, fat red earthenware water-jar. He splashed water over his head, face and wrists until he was thoroughly awake.

A knock on the door and his quick:

"*Entra!*"

Ushered in his host, again wearing his gaudy waistcoat and prodigious coat.

Hawthorne hastened to resume his coat and waistcoat and begged Mayorga, who had ceremoniously remained standing, to be seated. Sitting down himself, he waited for his host to speak.

"Shall we have *maté*?" the Spaniard queried.

"I drank so much water when I woke up a few moments ago," Hawthorne said, "that I am anything but thirsty."

"A cigar, perhaps?" Mayorga suggested.

"A cigar by all means," Hawthorne acquiesced.

When the cigars were lit, after a puff or two, Don Vicente began:

"You will, I trust, pardon my intrusion. But it is necessary that we talk. Since my siesta I have read the letters you brought. Believe me, my son, I take a very deep interest in one so well loved by my dear friends. I beg leave to speak to you as if you were indeed my son, say returned to Asuncion after a six years' absence."

"You have every leave," the young man assured him, "to say anything and everything you please."

"My son," Mayorga began, "you proclaimed this morning a very amazing purpose in coming to Asuncion."

"I was perfectly sincere," Hawthorne declared.

"Your sincerity was obvious," Don Vicente responded. "Astonishingly obvious. Still more astonishing was your temerity in uttering such sentiments to a stranger."

"Señor Don Vicente," Hawthorne spoke earnestly, "I



maintain that there was in what I did no trace of rashness. I considered myself perfectly safe in making any statement to you. A Spaniard of the pure blood never betrays a guest."

"You were justified in your faith, my son," Mayorga assented. "But the point I wish to make is that you must not again, while in Asuncion, feel yourself justified in any such faith in any human being until you have come to know well to whom you are talking and to be certain that they can be depended upon."

"I shall observe your suggestions," Hawthorne agreed somewhat stiffly.

"In the second place," Mayorga resumed, "your astounding announcement places me in a cruel dilemma. I will be very frank and open with you as you with me. From the bearer of such letters, from a man with such a face as yours, I shall have no secrets. To you I shall disembosom myself completely.

"As a Castilian, I cannot but love my king, and long for a complete and permanent restoration throughout all his dominions of his power and the peaceful domination of our Holy Church. As a man of sense, I cannot but feel that there is good hope and strong probability of such a happy outcome. Don José Fernando Abascal de Oviedo, our great viceroy and general, still reigns supreme and triumphant at Lima. He has reduced to subjection and loyalty, if we may believe what we hear, all of our king's possessions, except the parts of Granada lying near the mouth of the Orinoco, the plains of Cuyo and Tucuman, Buenos Aires and its neighbourhood, The Banda Oriental, and our Paraguay."

"I can bear you out there," Hawthorne put in. "Such were the accepted reports when I left Buenos Aires."

"Abascal," Mayorga continued, "has been so magnificently successful that, as a subject, as once having been, and perhaps yet again, fated to be a subject of my rightful king, I cannot but hope that he may yet crush the rebellion in Buenos Aires."

"General San Martín," Hawthorne cut in, "not only expects to maintain the independence of Buenos Aires, but hopes to conquer Peru."

Mayorga smiled, and said:

"I understand your enthusiasm for a brilliant commander under whom you have fought, but you will allow that such wild hopes are nothing but empty dreams."

"If you had inspected General San Martin's regiments at Buenos Aires, as I have," Hawthorne declared, "if you had seen them drill, and knew their quality and character, you would regard his aspirations as entirely sane and practical."

"That may be," Don Vicente hastened to soothe him. "But you must concede that discord exists everywhere about Buenos Aires, between the various provinces, even where civil war is not actually in progress; that the least disturbed are completely at odds with the city authorities; that there is much hostility of feeling and no coherence of purpose."

"All that is true," Hawthorne admitted.

"A poor basis for the hopes you seem to share," Mayorga remarked.

"If you knew him," Hawthorne maintained hotly, "if you knew his genius, his magnetism, his force, you would not regard any plan of his as chimerical."

"That may all be as you conceive," his host gently spoke, "but Abascal is now in undisturbed possession of the entire watershed of the Pacific, from Panama to Chiloe. A few rebel ships cruise off the coast, but they can effect nothing."

"They do not cruise off the coast any longer," Hawthorne interrupted him. "Admiral Brown has been compelled to round the Horn again and to return to Buenos Aires."

"There!" Don Vicente exclaimed. "Over against an impoverished and distracted revolted region we have a compact and united territory of vast extent, resources and population, completely in Abascal's hands, and he has generals of genius and force also, whose men are devoted to them. Pezuela and La Serna are generals by no means contemptible, masters of all branches of the art of war, and gifted with great powers. They are more than likely to overwhelm all this part of the world."

"That is entirely conceivable," Hawthorne acknowledged.

"Therefore," Don Vicente concluded, "I may yet live

to see Spanish troops reestablish Spanish rule at Asuncion. I cannot but feel it my duty to do nothing to strengthen the existing government of Paraguay and range myself instinctively with any movement likely to overthrow the present régime. Whatever your motives, you draw me to support you. Ascendency of us Spaniards would be a better thing for Paraguay, whatever the ultimate condition of our country. Heart and soul I am with you.

"Yet, as a man of property, as the father of a family, I hesitate. The man is so incredibly astute. He has such a hold upon the people. His spies are everywhere. Success against him seems impossible. And to be suspected, even, means ruin for my family and death for myself.

"I have reflected upon all these aspects of the matter, and I have come to this conclusion. I shall do nothing either to aid or oppose you in any way. And I shall ask you to remain my guest. Thus I shall place myself in the best possible position, whatever happens."

Hawthorne smiled.

"Since you are frank with me," he said, "may I be frank with you?"

"Assuredly, my son." Don Vicente beamed at him.

"So far from placing yourself in the best possible position," the young man began, "the lukewarm course you propose will make you equally despised by any party that succeeds. A reestablished Royalist government will say you did not help it. So will a successful independent republic. Supposing me betrayed to the Dictator, he will certainly be as severe on the man in whose house I lived as on any of my proved associates. You have nothing to gain, if you keep me in your house, by not throwing yourself heart and soul into my schemes. Take the bold course. Make up your mind one way or the other, and bend all your energies that way. If you keep me in your house, as you propose, you have nothing to lose by hearty cooperation with me, since my presence here exposes you to as much danger as would your most active participation with me."

"Not so!" Don Vicente vigorously argued. "You do not know our Dictator. If you should be betrayed, he would consider your presence in my house proof of my ignorance of your activities; your having left my house,

proof of my collusion with you. I know him. From all points of view—as a friend of your sponsors to me, as a Castilian, as a Paraguayan, as a cautious husband and father—I beg of you to remain my guest.”

“It is not possible,” Hawthorne sighed, “to refuse such an appeal when all my inclinations point the same way. I had intended, however, to rent a small house for myself, and thus endanger no one.”

“You are mistaken,” Don Vicente maintained. “Any one you rented from would be involved in your ruin were you betrayed, and after one day in my house any disaster to you will fall on me as well. I give you Godspeed in your lofty purpose, but by all means, since you are my guest, remain so. Believe me, it will be for the best.”

“I yield,” Hawthorne ruminated, “and here is my hand on my promise.”

Solemnly they clasped hands.

“We shall consider, then,” Don Vicente said, “two points as settled: you are to dwell here during your sojourn in Asuncion, and you are to feel free to prosecute your purposes without any hesitation.

“And now, having taken my advice upon matters of great moment, you may very properly accept my suggestions upon trifles. You came to Asuncion dressed according to the style of the rest of the world, wearing trousers, and without a sword. But for such a man as your letters of introduction demonstrate you to be this will never do in our Paraguay. We are antique, old-fashioned, what you will, but we are what we are. When in Rome do as the Romans do. No gentleman in Paraguay wears trousers; except on a bathing party, all wear knee-breeches. No gentleman goes abroad without a sword. Swordless, and wearing trousers, a man is marked as a slave, or at least as a free labourer. The populace, the gentry, even, will not accept you for what you are, cannot be brought to accept you for what you are, unless garbed as custom here demands.

“I have procured for you a hanger, such as our traders and merchants wear, and a belt to support it. Also I have a tailor here with his cloth, yard-sticks, shears, and cutting board. He will measure you, if you will agree, and by the time we have finished our talk he will have ready for

you a pair of knee-breeches, in which you can appear anywhere in Asuncion at no disadvantage."

Hawthorne, amused and acquiescent, agreed. But his thrifty New England soul shuddered at the tailor's prices, and he arranged to have some pairs of his trousers refashioned into knee-breeches, which the tailor offered to do at a ridiculously low figure. Evidently labour was as cheap in Asuncion as cloth was exorbitant.

As soon as the details were settled the tailor retired to the courtyard, where he squatted cross-legged between two of the pillars on the shady side.

Don Vicente reclosed the door, reseated himself, and lighted another cigar.

"How," he began, "do you propose to account to our government for your presence in Paraguay? All foreigners are suspected; all are closely questioned."

"I think that will be easy," Hawthorne replied. "I do not purpose to embark upon any revolutionary propaganda rashly or precipitately. I shall familiarize myself with conditions at Asuncion, and shall not initiate measures against the existing state of affairs unless I make up my mind that a change would really be for the good of the country."

The Spaniard, too polite to betray astonishment by word, exclamation, or movement, kept his face muscles also under excellent control. Yet his expression showed his amazement at the serene self-confidence, the calm self-reliance of this astounding lad, who was obviously sincere, and manifestly thought any government he disapproved of doomed to destruction, and any plans of his certain to succeed.

Hawthorne, oblivious to his host's countenance, went on:

"Meanwhile, I shall give out that I have come here with the idea of benefiting Paraguay and profiting myself by extending the export of *yerba maté* to Europe and North America. Such, in fact, is my purpose, whether I meddle in politics here or not. I believe that *yerba* can be made an article of import into every European country. Not a pound of it now goes beyond this continent. An extension of the demand to richer and more populous communities would make me a wealthy man and greatly increase the income of this government and the prosperity of Paraguay. It seems to me that such a scheme, properly presented,

would appear a sufficient reason for my presence here; that the necessary investigations as to the methods of the production, preparation, and export of the *yerba*, and the introduction of such improvements in those methods as European markets might demand, would cover effectually any amount of conspiracy and preliminaries of an insurrection. You see, my assigned object in coming here will be also my real object, one of my real objects, and a matter in which I am deeply interested."

"Your idea promises well," his host admitted, "but you will need superhuman subtlety to cope with the diabolical cunning of that demon."

"Dr. Parlett," Hawthorne remarked, "said that you could tell me all that would be necessary for me in dealing with him."

"The mere externals are easy enough to communicate," Mayorga reflected. "He begins to give audiences at nine. For any one to arrive earlier and loiter about the palace, or walk up and down near it until the hour, irritates him, and even infuriates him. Yet, to be the first to whom he gives audience is an advantage. So you had best time yourself on the first stroke of nine from the Cathedral tower. You must be prepared for anything. You may be let in without question or ceremony; you may be kept waiting; you may be subjected to one of his attempts at semi-royal ceremonial; you may be arrested."

"Arrested!" Hawthorne cried. "Would he dare?"

"Dare!" his host exclaimed. "Who or what is to hinder him? You have come up the river. What war-squadron could reach Asuncion? And who has a squadron to send? Not Buenos Aires, nor would they dream of it; still less of a land expedition after Belgrano's disaster. Abascal is on the other side of endless deserts; he could strike at us only after reducing Buenos Aires. And suppose all the rest of South America united against Paraguay, how long would even an irresistible force take to come at him, let alone reduce him? Suppose all the nations of the earth actuated by one motive only, and that hostility to him, a year at least must elapse before his power here would be so much as threatened. And the nations of the world scarcely know that Paraguay exists. We might as well be on another planet. As far as he is con-

cerned he rules the world, ruling this little world which is his; for, except our tiny minority of old Spaniards, all Paraguayans do his behests without hesitation or afterthought. Dare? It would never cross his mind that any risk could be involved!"

"But," Hawthorne insisted, "in respect to himself alone, would he stoop to arrest a harmless stranger?"

"Actually," his host recapitulated blandly. "You are surcharged with danger for him, and he may read you at a glance. But even if you appear harmless to him, he may act on baseless suspicion or mere whim, and never feel it as stooping."

"A notable characteristic of this remarkable man, I might almost say his chief characteristic, is his unsurpassable self-righteousness. He is transparently sincere and rigidly conscientious. I do not believe, I say it solemnly, that he ever, in all his life, spoke any word or did any action which he did not think right. But, by long-continued success and adulation he has come, he long ago came, to the point where anything he says or anything he does appears right to him. If the whim seize him he might have you arrested."

"But we wander from the point. I was telling you how to deal with him. Be prepared for anything. You may be shackled and thrown into an underground dungeon; approaching him you take your life in your hand."

"I took my life in my hand," Hawthorne breathed, "when I came to Paraguay; the details of the ordeal are not likely to daunt me."

"Oh," his host exclaimed, "I anticipate no difficulties for you. But the point is that anything may happen. You must adapt yourself to the exigencies of the moment and must think and act quick. Everything depends on the first impression you make. If he takes a fancy to you he will go out of his way to do you favours, will extend you all sorts of privileges, will overwhelm you with kindness. If he is prejudiced against you by any trifle, a word, an intonation, a gesture, nothing you can do will ever alter his valuation of you. He is incapable of entertaining the idea that he could form an incorrect judgment. Whatever he bans, is, he is sure, wrong always, everywhere and for all men; whatever he blesses is impeccable. So

be careful. Address him as Most Excellent Sir, or as Excellency. If you say 'you' once you are a lost man."

"Would he really order me shot?" Hawthorne suggested quizzically.

"No," Mayorga balanced seriously, "I think there is little danger of that. I believe he is in deadly earnest about that decree in respect to residents of Asuncion, and he would shoot you or any newcomer who said '*usia*' to him, if he thought it said intentionally. But he would probably not consider it an intentional insult unless a north-west wind were blowing. If he regarded it as a mere slip he might ignore it, especially if the wind were south-west. But most likely such a slip would cause him to dismiss you curtly and that would mean from him permanent and unalterable disfavour."

"You make him out a very petulant and splenetic being," Hawthorne considered. "There is something contemptible about such a nature."

"There is nothing contemptible about him," Mayorga maintained. "But, next to his self-righteousness, his implacability is his most salient characteristic. He is absolutely implacable. There was some difference between him and his father; what, no one ever knew. It might have been a quarrel, a disagreement, a mere general estrangement. An estrangement it certainly was. For many years it was a matter of common knowledge. Gaspar never went near Yaguaron, much less visited his father. They were completely strangers.

"When the old man was taken ill, he sent for his son; Gaspar refused to go. When plainly failing under his last illness he sent again. Again his messenger met with a curt refusal. When manifestly dying he sent again and again, without any success.

"When his father had but a few hours to live the curate of Yaguaron himself rode to Asuncion. He told how the padre was even then ministering to the dying man, how his father declared he could not die in peace unless reconciled to his son; how he begged and called for his boy. Gaspar obstinately refused to budge. Then the old padre himself, leaving his curate with the sinking overseer, galloped to Asuncion like a young soldier, spoke eloquently to Gaspar, painted the old man's agony of mind



in moving periods, told how he felt that he could never enter heaven unless his son made peace with him.

"Said Gaspar:

"'If my father cannot go to heaven without my forgiveness, let him burn in hell forever. I shall never forgive him, nor look at him.'

"And the old man died in terror, babbling and gasping."

"You make out this tyrant a monster," Hawthorne cried.

"You miss the point," Don Vicente argued. "The point is that he not only felt all the wrong was on his father's side, but derided the idea that his forgiveness could make any difference in the old man's guilt. He was perfectly certain he was right and, I doubt not, has never had a qualm of remorse since."

"You rouse me against him tenfold worse than before," Hawthorne said.

"The point is, not to give way to your feelings," his host admonished him, "but to conduct yourself so as to win his favour, or at least so as not to incur his disfavour."

"Well!" Hawthorne ejaculated resignedly.

"For one thing," Don Vicente warned him, "he pooh-poohs any refinements in food and drink. Plain eating he extols. Any expression of love of dainties irritates him. Particularly is this true of *maté*, snuff and cigars. He says all tobacco is tobacco and there is no difference. So of *yerba*. If he should chance to invite you to take *maté* with him he prepared to find it the meanest and cheapest *yerba de polos*. The preference you have expressed here for *caa cuys* would rouse his contemptuous wrath. He says those who dislike *caa miri* are ridiculous and affected, and that no human being can tell the three kinds apart by taste.

"I think at the moment of no other special point on avoiding his displeasure. No one could lay down any general precepts, for he seems moved by mere caprice. As to gaining his approval some hints may help you.

"He is a mass of vanity. For praise he is endlessly greedy, yet he is quick to detect intentional or laboured flattery, and resents a clumsy attempt at laudation. A

compliment to please him must be based on a solid foundation of fact and subtly presented.

"He is deeply interested in the natural sciences, in all sorts of insects, water-animals, fishes, reptiles, birds and beasts; has skeletons standing about on shelves; studies plants, flowers and seeds. If you are an adept at any of these pursuits it would gain his attention."

"I am no adept at zoology or botany," Hawthorne confessed, "but I have dabbled in both."

"Ability to talk on such subjects is a sure passport to his favour," the Spaniard told him. "Still more is he interested in books on history and mathematics. The calculation of the force of waterfalls for use on mill-wheels occupies him, for instance."

"I could meet him on my own ground there," Hawthorne ruminated.

"Better and better," Mayorga exclaimed, rubbing his fat, white hands. "Moreover, he is fond of mechanisms for making sparks; I forget the right word."

"Electrical machines," Hawthorne prompted him.

"Correct," Don Vicente beamed. "If you can talk to him as well as that he will love you. He regards the smallest suggestion on politics as an insult, but submits to any amount of schooling on the sciences. If you can show him you know more than he, he will like you."

"I know little," Hawthorne disclaimed, "but perhaps enough to arouse his interest."

"He respects any one," Mayorga added, "who can hold his own against him at chess and admires whoever dares and is able to win a game from him. Few can and fewer dare."

"I shall try," said Hawthorne simply.

"Above all," Don Vicente perorated, "he is absorbed in the study of the heavens, particularly in the prediction of eclipses."

"I can calculate an eclipse," Hawthorne declared.

"An eclipse of the sun?" the Spaniard queried.

"Certainly, of the sun," Hawthorne repeated.

"If you can bring that to his attention, as if accidentally" Don Vicente asserted, "and if you can verify his computations, he will love you. If you can detect an error in his reckonings and demonstrate to him your superiority

in that or in any science, he will favour you in all things."

"You make me hopeful!" Hawthorne cried.

"That is well," Don Vicente beamed. "Hopefulness is rare in Paraguay in our times."

"And now," he went on in an altered tone, "you will want to unpack your possessions and to settle yourself for your stay with us. I shall leave you to your own devices. Shall I send Bopî to assist you?"

"I think not, if you will permit me to decline," Hawthorne replied. "In fact I was not thinking of my trunks, but of going to Dr. Bargas' wine-shop; the British physician I encountered on the street told me I should find him there. I am curious to see more of him. If the tailor has my breeches ready and if you will tell me the way, I think I shall look up the eccentric doctor. He interests me."

"What energy!" Mayorga exclaimed. "What energy you Americanos possess! After four months on the river most men would think only of rest. However, if you wish to go there, it will be an excellent place of resort for you. In Dr. Bargas' wine-shop you can discuss our supreme Dictator as you please, speak your mind about him, and call him what you like. Bargas loathes him, all frequenters of Bargas' shop detest him. And they are loyal to each other and will never betray you. It is the one place in Asuncion where free speech is entirely safe."

"How do I reach it?" Hawthorne queried.

"Shall I send Bopî to show you the way?" his host countered.

"I should prefer not," Hawthorne demurred. "I like the fascination of finding my way about a strange city and noting the novel impression."

"Well," Don Vicente agreed, "just turn to your right as you leave this house, cross the street to the tall cactus hedge, follow it around to your left into Calle Comercio, go down the entire length of that street (it is not four hundred yards), cross the little stone bridge over the Riachuelo on your left, turn to your right round the corner of the row of houses there, away from the little marsh on your left, and Dr. Bargas' wine-shop, which is coloured purple and light green in broad stripes, will be directly ahead of you on your left. It stands all by itself, with

nothing across the street from it except a low wall. You cannot miss it. There is a tall cactus hedge round the property. The shop stands directly on the street, facing north-east."

"I believe I can remember all that," Hawthorne smiled. "Let us see how the tailor is getting on."

## CHAPTER V

### THE WINE-SHOP OF DOCTOR BARGAS

WHEN Hawthorne, all in sober brown, the buckled knee-breeches irking his ham-strings a trifle, the scabbard of his hanger whacking his brown-silk calves, started out into the still, tepid, late afternoon, he strolled leisurely, observing as he went. The houses between which he passed were low, the two largest with *azoteas*, the airy flat roofs, so agreeable on hot nights, where their owners slept in sultry weather and of which they were justly proud. The others had sloping roofs of ill-shaped red tiles, laid curve-up in uneven lines with white cement showing, lumpily, between. On the ridge-poles the gorged and drowsy vultures roosted in groups, or by twos and threes, or singly, hunched, repulsive shapes.

In the white-washed walls of the one-story structures every door was open and through each Hawthorne could see, as he passed, into the open quadrangle round which the house was built. In this open *patio*, or in the square, brick-floored passage leading from the street to this courtyard, sat the inmates. The gentlemen were coatless and freed of their waistcoats, like the Mayorga family at dinner. The necks of their frilled shirts were mostly open, but the lace-edged sleeves not now rolled up. Their knee-breeches hung loose, their silk stockings wrinkled on their plump calves; their feet were mostly in grass-cloth slippers. The ladies wore simple white cotton *tupois*, lace edged, very low at the neck, scarcely belted at the waist, and, in every case, manifestly the wearer's only garment. All, ladies and gentlemen alike, children too, lounged or lolled. Some were sipping *maté* from the gourds they held in the left hand through the tubes they held with the right;

some were eating melons. (Hawthorne wondered at the capacity for food of people who had presumably slept barely two hours after such a meal as he had partaken of at Don Vicente's overloaded table.) Every human being past childish years, unless eating or drinking, was smoking, smoking really huge cigars, the ladies' huger than the men's.

The long flank of the Cathedral on his right, ahead, he turned into Calle Comercio, a paved street along the south-west side of the market square. It was all one row of close-set shops or dwellings, squalid and crowded against each other. The porticoes in front of them, open-raftered, their whitewash scaled, peeled and discoloured, formed a sort of continuous covered sidewalk, on which the shops faced directly. Each was mostly a largish room, open alike to the street in front and the *patio* behind, with a smaller room on each side of it, sometimes with only one on one side, sometimes itself forming all the front of the structure, the other rooms of which were beyond its tiny courtyard.

Beyond that border of the Plaza, where there were houses on both sides of the street, some showed an open passage, leading to the *patio*; most had the main room of the house, like the shops, standing open to *patio* and street alike.

As in the larger houses, nearer the better quarter of the town, no door was closed, every inhabitant was in plain view. The women were even more lightly clad than their betters, mostly in a low-necked *tupoi* loosely drawn at the waist, but even on the poorest lace-edged over ankles always graceful, whether stockinged or bare. The men, besides their open shirts, wore wide, loosely flapping white trousers and grass slippers, mostly on bare feet. All were smoking or taking *maté* or eating melons, melons whose rinds they did not place on trays held by servants, as did the Mayorgas' neighbours, but threw flippantly into the highway, in which those on the sunny side of the street nearly sat, out in their porches, and in which those out on the shady side of the street actually were taking their ease. They were all unpleasant to Hawthorne, who picked his way disdainfully among the melon rinds, fresh, wilted or rotting, with which the street was strewn. The natives,

polite according to their origin, regarded him with in-offensive interest. But they spat often and loudly, the women louder and oftener than the men. Yet the men were all handsome as the gentlemen on the streets from which he had come, while the women, however loosely and lightly clad, were never slatternly nor slovenly, but all neat, clean and dainty; every one, even the crones, personable, and all the young ones pretty. Their throats were slender and long, their chins small and narrow, their faces small featured, their foreheads broad, their heads roundish, and, in contrast to their almost pointed chins, very wide across the brows. Not a negro, not a mulatto, not an octoroon did Hawthorne spy; all were of a type like nothing he had seen in Spanish America; plainly with a trace of Spanish blood, plainly with barely a trace; otherwise with what he correctly conjectured to be Guarani native characteristics.

Calle Comercio ended at a dusty, uneven open space, nearly a shapeless triangle, its north side a continuation of the line of the street, its east side almost at right angles to that, its long side bounded by a water course, a narrow gully grown up with bamboos, luxuriant weeds and lush, sedgy grasses. The little stone bridge was set askew of the stream, as of both flanks of the triangle.

Across the bridge Hawthorne squeezed himself against a whitewashed house-wall, blank and windowless up to the projecting, raftered eaves of the low-pitched gable-end. Along this, his right hand against it steadying him, his left foot almost in the mud, he picked his way past where the water-course above the bridge expanded into a bubbly little swamp, overgrown with tall vegetation on the farther side and on his edged with a flat of scummy ooze.

At the corner of the wall he turned into a solidly built-up street of mean houses, similar to that which had led him to the bridge. Along this he avoided more melon rinds, under the bland, kindly scrutiny of the idling population.

Just beyond where the continuous rows of dwellings and shops came to an end Hawthorne recognised the purple and green striped front of Dr. Bargas' wine-shop, projecting a foot or two north-eastward out of the tall, close hedge of thorn-cactus, which curved away towards his left.

Above the top of this cactus hedge he was surprised to see the coping of a white-washed stone yard-wall, high and substantial, just inside the hedge and continuous with it. Over the wall projected the lower limbs and dark, shining foliage of well-grown young orange trees.

The shop was a one-story structure, with the usual red-tile roof and jutting eaves. A two-pillared portico stood in front of it, sheltering the flat slab door-stone. As Hawthorne approached it the low sun, shining down the long, straight street, struck him full in the eyes. He turned into the open doorway, dazzled and half blinded.

He entered a big, ceilingless, raftered room, perceptibly cool and so dim that he barely descried several human figures, seated when he entered, rise to their feet as he spoke, asking:

"Is this the wine-shop of Dr. Bargas?"

"It is the wine-shop of Dr. Bargas," a big, resonant, genial voice answered him, "and I am that very Dr. Bargas."

By the light from the door Hawthorne saw approach him a tall, stout man, wearing a mighty amplitude of gaudy attire. His hand was held out and he continued:

"I take it that you are Don Guillermo Atorno, newly arrived at Asuncion."

"That is my name," Hawthorne acknowledged, "and I am the bearer of letters of introduction to Dr. Bargas from Don Luis Aldao of Santa Fé, from his uncle Don Francisco Candiotti, and from Don Estéban Maria Perrichon, post-master general of Corrientes."

"All my good friends," Dr. Bargas fairly shouted; "all my very good friends; almost as good friends as my best friend of all, the incomparable Marquess de Torretagle de Lima. You are my brother, my dear brother, henceforward, Señor Don Guillermo, bringing letters from such dear friends, and requiring for that matter no letter of introduction except your own appearance."

He grasped Hawthorne's hand in his large, warm palm, waving an expansive left hand towards every part of the room.

"Gentlemen," he said, "let me present to you the friend of Don Luis, of Don Francisco, of Don Estéban, of myself, of all of us, Señor Don Guillermo Atorno *de los Estados*

*Unidos del America del Norte*, of whom Don Tomas has been telling us."

The good doctor paused, made a vast inhalation of breath, like the wind blowing down a long street at night, and continued: "Señor Don Guillermo, let me present you to General Don Fulgencio Yegros, the renowned victor of Paraguay; to Padre Don Lisardo Bogarin, one of the chief ornaments of our native clergy, renowned for his learning and piety, and to Don Gregorio de la Cerda, the most popular and beloved gentleman in all Paraguay, friend of every patrician family in the country, always in demand at christenings, and godfather, *padrino* or *compadre*, as the case may be, to every human being in our genteel circles."

All bowed gracefully in acknowledgement of the introduction; but, as the privilege, rigidly reserved in Spain for the *Grandees*, was arrogated to himself by every gentleman in the new world, where heads were uncovered only in church and in company of ladies, all kept their hats on.

Every one, however, produced his snuff box and the introduction was sealed, as it were, by repeated bowings and pinches of snuff.

Hawthorne was bowed into a chair, Don Lisardo sat on a chest, Don Gregorio on a pile of boxes, Don Fulgencio on a stack of bales, while their host half sat, half leaned, on the edge of the big table, one foot on the floor, one swinging.

During the one-sided discourse which ensued Hawthorne had plenty of opportunity to observe his surroundings and companions.

The big rectangular interior of the wine-shop reminded him a good deal of a barn, and a good deal more of a warehouse. Staring up at its blackened rafters, he could see between the roof-planks the rough under-surfaces of the tiles and here and there hanging gobbets of mortar. The walls were white-washed. In either gable end was a sashless, jalousied window, big, and high up. On either side of the street door, midway of that half of the street wall, was a bigger window, low-down, sashless, jalousied inside, as he had seen them barred outside. The light in the room came from the three doors, most of it from the open street-door, some from the door into the courtyard,



even a little from the door into another room. The floor was brick. Each end wall was piled up to the high window-sill with wine-casks, tier upon tier, laid flat, butts to wall and heads outward. All along the front wall were similarly piled sharp-cornered *tercios* of *maté*, ranked up to the eaves, like well-piled cord-wood, from wall to window and window to door. Between the two rear doors stood a tall *bufete*, being chest of drawers, writing desk, filing cabinet and book-case one above the other, all in one. It was a magnificent piece of furniture in unsurpassable mahogany. On each side of it, against it and the wall, were towering piles of blunt-cornered *serons* of tobacco, extending to the door-jambs; and beyond the doors other piles of tobacco-*serons* lined the walls to the eaves, till they jostled the wine-casks.

The brick floor was mostly hidden under wine-casks, supported on skids; one set single, one double, tier above tier, both sets with battered silver tankards and goblets lying anyhow on the casks in the spaces between them; an isolated stack of tobacco-*serons*, waist high, two more of square-cornered, trunk-like *petacones* of hide with the hair on for holding cigars; three chests, several chairs like that on which he was, with leather seats and excessively tall, straight backs. In the middle was the big, battered, clumsy-legged table of black lapacho-wood on whose edge the doctor sat. His costume was sufficiently striking; a cocked hat, set on the back of his head, a light yellow coat with big white mother-of-pearl buttons and plenty of expanse of lapels, pocket-flaps and cuffs; a gold-embroidered waistcoat, open to display a vast bulge of cravat and shirt-frill; green satin knee-breeches with gold knee-buckles; white silk stockings, gold-buckled shoes, a long rapier in a silver scabbard. His hair was powdered and pomatumed and confined in a bag-wig; his face was jovial and rosy.

Dr. Fulgencio was a most un-Spanish-looking man. He was considerably over six feet tall and even disproportionately large at neck, wrists, ankles, feet, hands, and in every dimension, so that, although he showed no trace of fat or plumpness anywhere, he must have weighed nearly three hundred pounds. Hawthorne was amazed at the impression of muscular power this man gave, even in relaxed repose. He was a pattern Samson. Bull-killing, lion-

strangling and other such feats would, one felt, be trifles to this Gaucho Hercules. His costume was approximately the uniform of a Spanish general of viceregal days; a blue coat with red facings and some narrow gold lace; white waistcoat, knee-breeches and silk stockings, with gold buckles on the knee-straps, and low shoes, set off by a big cavalry sabre in a black leather scabbard. His vast shock of curly reddish hair billowed out from under his tricolour-cockaded, rather flattish cocked hat; his face was florid, his eyebrows very bushy, his eyes goggling and prominent, his nose low at the bridge, spread wide at the nostrils, and so flat that you seemed looking into two round holes in his face.

Don Gregorio was wearing a light drab coat with dove-coloured facings and large, cloudy mother-of-pearl buttons, a gold embroidered, dove-coloured waistcoat, pearl-grey satin knee-breeches and paler silk stockings. His knee-buckles and shoe-buckles were gold, and his cocked hat very tall. From his shoulders hung gracefully behind him a brilliant scarlet *capote*, one of those riding-cloaks which could be made all-enveloping on occasion, but which Spanish-American gentlemen seemed to delight in for ornament only, even in the hottest weather.

He was a great contrast to his bovine neighbour, a Castilian at all points, feet and hands incredibly small, ankles and wrists delicately slender, every proportion graceful and aristocratic, his eyebrows pencilled, his brow serene, his eyes wide-set, small and brilliant, his nose straight and high, his expression, like his demeanour, irradiating a courtly good will and alluring to affection and confidence.

Padre Lisardo wore an amazing jumble of discordant garments. On his head the flat-crowned, roll-brimmed shovel-hat of the Spanish parish priest, on himself, the long habit of a Franciscan friar, open all the way down and showing, under it, the black silk waistcoat, black satin knee-breeches, black silk stockings and low black shoes of a Doctor of Laws; against his calves the sheath of a horseman's sabre, with which neither priest nor lawyer had any business, and over his shoulder a purplish-pink *capote* rivalling Dr. Gregorio's.

He was a medium-sized man, compactly built and rather spare, but with a notably protuberant stomach. His face

was dark, the jaws with a bluish tinge from a close-shaven beard under the skin.

While Hawthorne was taking all this in, only himself and his host had spoken, rather in a one-sided fashion.

Barely had the doctor settled his prodigious rapier-sheath against his leg when he burst out sonorously:

"This poor abode of mine is henceforth yours, Señor Don Guillermo, at any hour of the day or night, for any necessity or caprice that may actuate you. Use it as your own, I beg of you. Observe it, consider it, become acquainted with it. This room, as you see, is my warehouse, wine-room, shop, office, living-room, drawing-room and dining-room. What do you think of it, Señor Don Guillermo?"

"I think——" Hawthorne began.

"True!" his host interrupted him. "Most true. Your observations are just in every particular. But as you observe, this is not such an abode as befits me, not such as I am used to. It suffices, it suffices, Señor Don Guillermo, for the five months or so of each year which I spend at Asuncion, but it is not such a dwelling as the house of my father, of my grandfather, of my ancestors since Hurtado de Mendoza's time. Its *patio* would contain four such properties as this of mine, wall, hedge and all; its *sala* would hold this entire house and leave room between its ridgepole and the gilded rafters of its panelled ceiling; its walls are coloured tiles, its floors variegated marbles, its furniture inlaid and carved, its beds heavens of sleep, its dining-hall a paradise of feasting.

"Not a viceroy, from the time of the great Conde de Neva, but has been a guest there; the great Francisco de Toledo honoured it with his presence.

"But I talk, Señor Don Guillermo; I talk instead of listening to your discourse, which I so long to enjoy.

"What, Señor Don Guillermo, do you think of Asuncion?"

"I think——" Hawthorne began.

Again he was interrupted.

"Your remark, Señor Don Guillermo, shows an amazing power of comprehension. You have the very spirit of Asuncion, its essence, its reality, already by heart. But Asuncion, great and wonderful as it is, was never, speaking

justly, to be compared to Mendoza. You should behold Mendoza, Señor Don Guillermo. There is the poor home of my fathers, to which I have alluded; there are my household gods, there is my property. There I have been twice *Alcalde de primer voto*, Mayor in short, Mayor of Mendoza. From Mendoza I have been member of the Audiencia of Charcas, of the supreme court of the viceroyalty, such was my reputation at Mendoza for erudition in law and discretion in dealing with legal questions.

"But I have abandoned the law, Señor Don Guillermo, except now and then, you understand, to oblige a friend. I must provide for my family, Señor Don Guillermo.

"Six children, Señor Don Guillermo, six angels, cherubs, seraphs. My good friend, the Marquess de Torretagle de Lima, has often said to me that never, nowhere, had he seen such children. They are like their mother, Señor Don Guillermo. Such a woman! Such delicacy of spirit! Such intellect! Such charm! Such a noble woman! A small waist, a small neck, neat ankles, small wrists, tiny feet and hands, such are the marks of race universally acknowledged. But not the only marks of race nor the chief charm of women of race.

"The hang of a woman's skirts, Señor Don Guillermo; that, I say, in a woman possessing all the other characteristics, is the last and supreme sign of the possession of blue blood for generations. Watch a woman as she walks up the church before you, watch her on promenade. Have her skirts that sway and swing which is the very music of motion? Then she is refined to the last degree in ancestry, nature and up-bringing. Such is my wife, truly *abundante de nalgas*, truly possessing the highest charm of womanhood.

"For her, for my cherubim, I must provide. The emolument of a judge of Audiencia, the fees of a licentiate of law, these are insufficient. I am lucky. Our family possesses a vineyard, a large vineyard, the best vineyard among all the vineyards of Mendoza. From this I draw my revenues like my ancestors before me. It is to sell my Mendoza wine that I come to Asuncion. Let me offer you a sample of my best."

The voluble doctor swung himself off his table, took up one of the silver goblets which lay on the skidded casks,

drew it full of wine, forced it on Hawthorne, handed a similar goblet to each of the others, filled one for himself, and reseated himself on the table-edge.

"We will drink——" he began.

"You won't drink at all without me!" a thick voice, familiar to Hawthorne, interrupted him.

All turned. In the doorway to the inner room stood the little English surgeon, swaying a trifle on his feet.

"That woke me!" he expanded. "Speak of drink and Tom Parlett is awake."

He advanced unsteadily.

"Introduce us properly, Jenofonte," he gurgled reproachfully. "He and I have not yet been formally presented to each other."

And he clasped Hawthorne's hand in his, while their host, as it were, intoned a benediction over them.

"Don Guillermo Atorno, Doctor Tomas Parlett."

Filling another goblet, he handed it to the doctor.

"And now," he said, "let us drink to the glory and prosperity *de los Estados Unidos del America del Norte*."

All drank, bowing to Hawthorne, who bowed in turn.

When they had reseated themselves Dr. Parlett began humming an air; after a few bars droned on into maudlin singing in English:

"Lost her sheep, lost her sheep, and don't know where to find 'em; but leave 'em alone and they'll come home, bringing their tails behind 'em."

Hawthorne saw a subtle but unmistakable alteration of demeanour occur in every man present.

The host called sharply:

"Bopî!"

A mulatto boy, a duplicate of Mayorga's servitor, appeared in the court-yard door-way.

Dr. Bargas spoke to him in Guarani; he grunted and turned away. In a moment he returned, a round hat on his head, and shambling out of the street-door.

"And now, sweet William," the muzzy surgeon said in English, "I may tell you that you are in the right pew! You may trust me, my lad!"

He changed to Spanish:

"Jenofonte," he proclaimed, "I'll show the newcomer over the premises."

## WINE-SHOP OF DOCTOR BARGAS 61

"Over my premises," Dr. Bargas exclaimed, questioningly, quizzically and reprovingly.

"Be sensible, Jenofonte," Parlett retorted. "He'll understand my English much easier than your Spanish. And I'll be quicker, anyhow."

"Come on, Jonathan," he added in English to Hawthorne. "Let me show you the ropes."

Hawthorne followed acquiescently through the left-hand door.

He found himself in a room about a quarter the size of the one from which he had come. It had a second door to his right opening on the *patio*, and in each of the other walls a large, sashless, closely jalousied window. As in the shop the rafters were rough and blackened, the walls white-washed, and the floor worn brick. Two of the corners were piled up with baskets of dried figs from Mendoza; a third with small *petacones* for fine cigars; in the fourth stood a tall water-jar of red earthenware. The other furniture consisted of an ample rack with an old silver-mounted, velvet-covered saddle, a leather saddle, several bridles and other horse-gear; a bed which was a mere low hide-stretcher; a gorgeous red, green and blue hammock, hanging corner-wise across the room, and two chairs, tall-backed and hide-seated, on one of which by the water-jar stood a silver wash-basin. On the walls hung a long-barrelled fowling-piece, a short, bell-mouthed blunderbuss, and a brace of horseman's pistols. Clothes hung on pegs, on the horserack, on the chairs, and lay on the bed, even on the floor, which was littered with boots, shoes, papers and oranges.

"This," said the surgeon, "is our host's bedroom. I snooze here quite a deal."

He passed out into the shaded *patio*. It was a nearly circular enclosure, broken only by the house. In it stood two mud-walled huts, through the door of one of which Hawthorne could see a fire smouldering on a sand-pit in the middle of the earth floor.

"That's where Bopî cooks the doctor's *asado* and *guisado* and *alla* and all the rest of it," the surgeon said, "and that other's where he sleeps. I call him little Bo Peep, and when I think we are trending towards conversation our one-eyed friend had better not hear, I hum the nursery

tune at them. They know it by this time, fairly knowing the words. Jenofonte sends him off on a wild goose chase and we're safe. See?"

Hawthorne nodded.

"This place," Parlett continued, "was built by Espinosa as part of his vacillating provision for his government tobacco-monopoly. It stands all by itself, has a wall no man could climb, and a cactus hedge no man could scramble through. It's an ideal place for a warehouse, for valuable merchandise, so there is nothing suspicious in our good doctor renting it. Therefore, for all reasons, it is the safest place for conversation in all Asuncion, or certainly the least dangerous. You understand?"

Hawthorne nodded again, and they returned to the warehouse.

They found Dr. Bargas on one knee by a wine-skid drawing a tankard of wine. This he handed to a bare-foot, barelegged poncho-clad Indian peon with a red bandanna tied round his head. While the Indian gulped down the wine the doctor opened a *petacon*, took out a handful of cigars, and held them out to the peon, who took two, found a small coin in his belt, paid his reckoning, and shuffled out.

Then Hawthorne noticed a neat, respectful native woman, with a bundle on her head. This she swung down and handed to Dr. Bargas. He opened it, counted the cigars, and after a brief chaffering in guttural Guarani, paid her, and dumped the cigars carelessly into a *petacon*, shutting the lid over them.

But before the woman went out a poorly-dressed old Spaniard had entered, a man who might have been a carpenter or other sort of mechanic.

"Ah, Pablo," the doctor had greeted him, "the papers are all ready, as I promised."

He opened his *bufete*, handed the old man a packet, and said:

"One *peso* is enough, Pablo."

The old man fumbled in a pocket, brought out the silver coin, and went away, after a civil salutation to the company, returned with equal civility.

"And now," the little surgeon began, "since our busy doctor has a moment's leisure and we are all to ourselves,

I want to tell you, Don Guillermo, that you are in the right shop at last. Here we speak our minds on any subject and dare to utter any man's name."

"Yes. Any man's name," Don Fulgencio parroted.

Half the ruddy colour faded out of his face as he spoke.

"Even the name of Dr. Francia?" Hawthorne enunciated crisply.

"Even that name!" Don Gregorio and Padre Lisardo affirmed, in very forced tones.

Hawthorne noted that neither pronounced the name.

"Even the name of Dr. Francia," the little surgeon echoed valorously, but he went mottled all over his face as he uttered the dread syllables, adding with an effort, with a sort of explosion:

"We all hate him here!"

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MALCONTENTS

**D**O I hate him?" Hawthorne ruminated, his calm eyes full on the surgeon's.

"Any son of liberty and countryman of Benjamin Franklin ought to hate him, sight unseen," Parlett asseverated vehemently. "If you don't hate him to-day you will by this hour to-morrow, yes, by now to-morrow. You haven't the *grillos* on your legs; you aren't in his dungeon or his *cuartel*, but you are his prisoner in his prison as I am. All Paraguay is his prison. You are as much his prisoner as I and ought to hate him as I do."

"Why do you hate him?" Hawthorne queried placidly, with the open-minded air of an unbiased investigator probing for information.

"Reason enough for me, my boy," Parlett declared. "He won't let me go home."

"'Let you go,' he says. 'Never! Why, you're the only capable surgeon in Paraguay. Shall I let all the natives and the city and all the *hacendados* and their families and all the clergy and government and myself depend on quacks like Baiguer, fools like Sabola, dolts like Narvaez? No,' says he, 'you're too valuable to let go. Here you'll stay,'



says he. 'And why do you want to leave?' says he. 'Isn't the climate salubrious, the scenery lovely, the city beautiful, the people charming? Don't you live well and comfortably in luxury and abundance? Don't you coin money all the year round? Oughtn't you to be happy, honoured as a wizard and with gold poured into your lap?'

"'What good is gold to me,' says I, 'if I gamble it away and drink it up?'

"'Keep sober,' says he, 'and don't gamble, and you'll stay rich. It's your own fault if you spend faster than you make. You are paid high and always in demand. Stay sober as I do.'

"'I could stay sober,' says I, 'if I knew I could go home with my earnings when I've made my fortune. But to live and die in this cursed hole makes my gorge rise. I'm that homesick I get drunk for comfort and gamble for forgetfulness. To know I could go home would make a man of me.'

"'Be a man yourself,' says he. 'Anyhow, here you stay,' says he.

"'So off I go and get drunk and stay drunk. I'll die here in this hell of a country. Small wonder that I hate him. He's murdering me before my time, forcing me to liquor to forget I'm his prisoner. Hate him! You bet I hate him!'

The fat little man shook with unaffected Celtic rage.

Hawthorne turned to the sword-girt monk.

"'Why do you hate him?'" he questioned.

"'I!'" Padre Bogarin exclaimed. "'Why do I not hate him? Must not any good son of Holy Church, still more any ecclesiastic, hate him consumedly? He is an open free-thinker, boasting of his confidence in his own judgment, condemning the Holy Evangel, tradition and authority, publicly deriding the clergy. He says we are of no use in the world; we make people believe rather in the devil than in God!'

"'He talks of God, but his god is the god of Voltaire, worse than heathen gods, worse than no god. Prating of what god he pleases to fashion for himself he undermines the faith of all he meets and allures them to everlasting perdition. And his example is worse than his utterances. From the very day he was sure of his popularity, of his

influence, he ceased to attend the offices of religion. Never, since he was elected a member of the Cabildo full thirteen years ago, has he heard mass or so much as entered a church during mass. The sight of him in church at mass would startle beholders far more than an earthquake; would seem to our Guaranies far more of a portent than ever did the eclipses at which they no longer shudder since he has instructed them that the phenomena he predicts to the hour occur not by the will of God, but by the operation of natural laws.

"Since he ceased attending to his Christian duties he has been inside a church only when the conventions met in our Cathedral, because no other building in Asuncion is large enough for such an assemblage. There, in the presence of all the notables of Paraguay, he has cynically displayed his contempt for the holiness of a consecrated edifice, especially at the first meeting of the first convention. That was in July of 1811, just five years ago next month, four months after our defeat of the invaders and two months after the pronunciamiento.

"The meeting was presided over by Don Bernardo Velasco, our ex-governor and president of the temporary *junta* which had taken charge of affairs after the pronunciamiento, and by Bishop Evaristo de Panés. He had given the delegates his benediction and Don Bernardo had stated that the object of the Congress was to debate whether Charles the Fourth had never ceased to be our king, or whether Ferdinand the Seventh had, by his father's abdications, become king and had remained so after his own abdications; to decide to which our loyal allegiance was properly due.

"Then up rose this demon, this Apollyon incarnate.

"Naturally, as the most esteemed layman in Paraguay, as the most erudite and proficient jurist in Asuncion, as the most eloquent orator and the most elegant writer among us, he had been made secretary of the *junta* and of the convention.

"A small table had been placed on the platform to the left of the Bishop's and Intendente's armchairs. At this he sat, his back to the window, in a small armless chair, a conspicuous figure.

"He arose. From his breast he drew one of his long-

barrelled horseman's pistols. He laid it upon the table in front of him. At sight of a weapon in the house of God all held their breath in horror! The sacrilegious audacity of the wretch froze every muscle of the assemblage. He spoke. The habit of listening to him in court and in public places swayed us all, even us of the church, of the government. He spoke in a loud, clear voice. Every man in the convention, every spectator in the crowds standing around the walls and at the lower end of the cathedral heard him.

" 'This convention,' he said, 'will not spend one moment on debating whether the cowardly father or the craven son is king of Spain. Each has abdicated and abdicated again. Each has shown his feeble mind and treacherous heart. Neither is justly any longer king of anywhere.

" 'But let either be king of Spain, let neither be king of Spain, what care we? Neither of them to a certainty is any longer king of Paraguay. That was settled at Buenos Aires a year ago last May and at Paraguay last March. Paraguay is no appanage of Spain, no province of Buenos Aires. Paraguay is independent and a republic.

" 'The sole question that shall be debated before this congress and decided by majority vote is how we may best vindicate and maintain our independence against Spain, Lima, Buenos Aires and Brazil; how we may preserve internal peace; how we may promote the prosperity of Paraguay and of all the inhabitants of Paraguay; in short, what form of government we are to adopt.

" 'My arguments in favour of my expressed views are two only. You perceive the former.'

"He lifted the pistol from the table.

" 'You behold the latter!' he shrilled like a bugle.

"From his other inside breast-pocket he drew a second silver-mounted, shining-barrelled pistol, his finger on the trigger.

" 'I shall put my opinions in the form of a motion,' he said measuredly. 'It is this:

" 'That the deliberations of this congress shall be confined to debating the best methods for establishing a republican form of government in Paraguay and perpetuating its peaceful independence.

"‘I have written this motion in fair characters on a sheet of paper. Here it is.’

"He handed the paper to his page-boy, who presented it to the ex-Intendente.

"‘Señor Don Bernardo,’ says this grinning devil, ‘you are the presiding officer of this convention. You have the motion before you. Will you put the motion?’

"No man save this wily fiend had dreamed of bringing a loaded pistol into a church. We all had our swords, but what were swords against two pistols such as his in the hands of a cool man renowned for his ability to hit at each shot a flying sparrow?

"No man spoke.

"Don Bernardo read the motion aloud.

"‘Do I hear any second to this motion?’ he asked.

"Then up rose Don Prudencio la Guardia.

"‘I,’ he said, ‘second this motion.’

"‘The motion,’ said Don Bernardo, ‘you have heard. It is now open for debate.’

"‘I have but two arguments for this motion,’ spoke the grinning fiend. ‘You behold them. Has any man better arguments?’

"No man spoke. There was a long silence. Then up spoke this Mephistopheles again.

"‘It appears, your Excellency,’ he said, ‘that the convention is ready to vote on the motion without debate!’

"Don Bernardo put the motion. No man voted against it.

"Shall I not hate so masterful a devil?

"And he has done worse since than mere desecration of a church! He has dissolved the Holy Inquisition and permits any man to hold any opinions that please him, however blasphemous.

"What is more, he has confiscated to the state nine-tenths of the lawful revenues of our Bishop, of the Cathedral Chapter, of the Monasteries, and of the parish churches. And he talks of abolishing tithes altogether.

"Seeing Holy Church and my order insulted, humiliated and robbed, must I not hate him?"

Padre Lisardo paused for mere lack of breath.

Hawthorne turned to the giant Gaucho.

"And you, Don Fulgencio?" he queried. "Why do you hate him?"

"I?" Yegros enunciated ponderously, "Who should be first in this republic? Is it not I who beat back the Porteños from our city? Was it not I who hemmed in their army? Was it not I who compelled Don Manuel Belgrano to surrender with all his forces? Was it not I who vindicated the freedom of Paraguay? A country is not made free by pronunciamientos, by *juntas*, by cabildos, but by force of arms. It was my stand at Paraguay that checked General Belgrano in his victorious advance. It was my cavalry, who, while this scrivener skulked in the city, when Intendente Velasco had fled from the camp, after Caballero and his infantry were defeated, held back the main body of Porteños and gave Cabañas the chance to overwhelm Ramirez and his advance-guard. It was I who won the second battle on January nineteenth. But for me Belgrano would never have surrendered and Asuncion would now be a mere capital of a province, a mere tributary of Buenos Aires. If the Porteños acknowledged our independence, if we are free, it is my doing. I see myself set aside. And for him! I could have endured to give way to Cabañas, though he would never have been victor at Tacuari had I not held out at Paraguay. I could have borne to step aside for Caballero. His infantry, though repulsed, kept together and fought gallantly. All men know that it is said that cavalry are but helpers to infantry, that without infantry cavalry can do nothing. I should not have resented seeing myself ignored for Zevallos. His squadrons did near as well as mine in both battles. But to be shoved aside for a *tinterillo* who did not so much as run away, this is unendurable!

"And the manner of his insidious wiles is worse than the fact. I was hailed as saviour of the city, of the country, and justly. And I must look on and behold my own troopers set against me, wheedled and suborned till I knew I could no longer depend on their fidelity, and that he who never swung a sword or fired a pistol in the whole war could be certain of their obedience, of their alacrity. This is wormwood to drink indeed. Even after all his intrigues he could not relegate me to insignificance by his machinations. When the republic was to elect consuls for

a year, the second convention chose me first and him second. Then he devised for me a trap, a trick, a snare. We were to be inaugurated consuls together. The people crowded the Plaza, the troops paraded, the bands played war-tunes, my heart swelled. On the platform before the Cabildo we took our oaths to save the republic. The chairs were set for us under the crimson canopy, the members of the *juntas*, of the Cabildo, the city delegates to the second convention stood about to see us chaired.

"The chairs were big, made for the occasion, with velvet cushions on the seats, inlay everywhere, and carving all over. On the back of each was a medallion and on it a name. I saw carved in big letters, inlaid with mother-of-pearl:

" '*Cesar*'

" '*Pompeyo*'

"The names meant nothing to me. I had never heard of *Cæsar* or *Pompey*.

"Says this sly devil to me, soft and bland:

" 'Which chair will you choose, General?'

"I, not to be outdone in politeness by a *tinterillo*, reply:

" 'They are all the same to me. A chair is a chair; I give you the choice.'

"Whereupon he seats himself in the chair labelled '*Cesar*.' I take the other. I think: 'I am Consul, coequal with this man, half at least of the whole government of Paraguay.' I am deceived. Alas, how much deceived! I find myself from that moment a nobody, a jest, a joke. Whatever I propose all say to me, 'Be silent. You yourself chose the Pompey chair. Henceforth you are Pompey; he is *Cæsar*.' I do not understand. They tell me of *Cæsar* and of Pompey. I comprehend. I am silent. I yield all to this demon, this satan. But even then I do not wholly comprehend. Little by little I learn. I am Pompey not only in the Government House but everywhere. Men who would not have dared a year before to look me in the eye address me as '*Pompeyo*'! The urchins on the street yell after me, '*Pompeyo*'!

"Shall I not hate this devil?

"And, when our year of consulship is over, I am still '*Pompeyo*.' And then he, Dictator, absolute, all powerful, says to me, '*Fulgencio*' (for he never uses the nickname

he has fastened on me) 'I have refused to accept the salary voted to me by the state; the republic is poor, bachelors like me and widowers like you do not need large incomes. I have accepted but a third of what was offered. It is for you, as a patriot, to accept but a third of your pay as colonel.' I agree. And the next day I am gazetted retired, with the title of general and half of the third of the pay of a colonel!

"'Paraguay is at peace,' he says. 'We need but one regiment of infantry. No generals are needed, and one colonel is enough. That colonel's name is José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia.'

"Shall I not hate him?"

Hawthorne turned to his host.

"And why do you hate him?" he queried.

Dr. Bargas swung his foot and stared out of the open door. Slowly his gaze turned to meet Hawthorne's questioning eyes.

"When you have experienced his insulting demeanour, his contemptuous treatment, you will understand why I hate him," he said. "And also because he has increased the taxes on Mendoza figs and on Mendoza wine, and the export taxes on cigars and *yerba*. That hits me everywhere. What is more, he exacts the collection of every *maravedi* of each separate tax. Now, as when good Don Bernardo Velasco was Intendente, so under the first and under the second *junta*, while our good friend here Don Gregorio was Assessor of Customs, I never paid any tax in full. I paid half and Don Gregorio had a gift now and then and the state could well afford to accept half, which was all it was fairly entitled to in justice, anyhow, and we were all satisfied. Now I must pay all, and my profits are cut to nothing, to nothing, and my income reduced to a mere pittance. Surely I have reason to hate him!"

"And you, Señor Don Gregorio?" Hawthorne asked. "Why do you hate him?"

"I am not sure," Don Gregorio ruminated, "that I do hate him. I am not a good hater. But if I hate anybody I surely hate him. For look you, I was a member of the second *junta* and continued as assessor of the customs. I was, one might say, the government for the time being. I received many presents, as Don Jenofonte has said.

Presents are agreeable, income is pleasant. He has cut off my income, I receive presents no more; I am a poorer man. But I do not think I hate him for this. I am a member of the government no longer, no longer assessor of the customs. But I do not think I hate him for this. But of old I could help my godchildren, my godsons and goddaughters, my *ahijados and ahijadas*. I could help all the families of my *compadres* and *comadres*, as a good *padrino*, a good *compadre* should. Now I am without power, without influence. A godson of mine wants a place under the government, a goddaughter of mine is to be married and her bridegroom wants a place under the government. I am powerless; I am without influence; I must see the good appointments go to mere peasants, men of capacity perhaps, but not at all of good family, not related to the families of my fellow-godfathers and fellow-godmothers. Thus my *compadres* and *comadres* honour me no more, seeing that I no longer fulfil the duties of a *padrino*, of a *compadre*, that I no longer provide places for my godsons and the husbands of my goddaughters. So I feel culpable and a bad godfather, a bad fellow-godfather. My conscience pricks me and I see this sly fiend sneer at me, as no longer of any worth in the republic, since he has ousted me. Yet of old I was of importance. I was assessor. One came to me and asked for a special permit to sail in spite of the blockade. I gave it, if he was related to one of my *comadres* or *compadres*. He got his permit. His ship was allowed to sail. Now I have no influence. All things are in the hands of this Dictator. I am nobody. All proceeds according to his decisions. No man is favoured because he is related to any one. I am nobody."

Hawthorne almost laughed aloud at the naïve fatuity of the grave Don.

Yet he had not the heart to smile in the face of his transparent sincerity, of his unclouded reverence and enthusiasm for a régime of favouritism and bribery.

Padre Lisardo sighed.

"Yes," he said, "we all have reason to hate him. And we hate in vain. We are powerless, we are impotent. We are his slaves. No man in Paraguay can make head against him; no man dare try. Our ancestors were daring; we are supine. Our ancestors were capable; we are spineless.



We do nothing. Nothing can be done. Perhaps we were not well off under our King's governors. Surely we are worse off under our Dictator."

He sighed again.

"Gentlemen," Hawthorne exclaimed, "I ask your indulgence. Listen to me, I beg of you. I come from a country which is better off under a republic than it was under a king; which has established an independence without a despotism. I come of a race which dares not only to talk but to act, which dares to make head against any man. I have had experiences of conspiracies, insurrections, wars and battles. I have fought shoulder to shoulder with Spaniards and Creoles and sat with them in council. I will never believe that Spaniards of the pure blood are spineless or are supine except from temporary policy. I come from a land which possesses true liberty; I love true liberty. I have come to Paraguay in the belief that even now somewhere in secret there is a movement towards true liberty. I have come to find that movement, to join it. I believe I can be of use to any cause I join; I have that confidence in myself. With that confidence I have come to Asuncion with the well-considered purpose of ascertaining whether he is truly what I hear, and if so of compassing the overthrow of Dr. Francia."

Don Fulgencio turned mottled brown all over his face; Padre Lisardo went dead pale; Don Gregorio's genial countenance set with a death-mask smirk; Dr. Bargas unbuckled his sword belt and threw sword, belt and all on a chest with a clatter.

Parlett exclaimed:

"Bully for the boy! He's a valiant cock-sparrow! Eagles are too puny for him; he'd fight nothing smaller than a condor. I like your sporting blood, Jonathan. You have spirit!"

"Don Tomas!" their host rebuked him. "Leave jesting for a suitable occasion. Don Guillermo speaks seriously on a most serious matter. None more serious for him or for us could be thought of. Let us listen to him as he asks. He has the air of having more to say."

"I have more to say," Hawthorne continued. "You all hate him, you say. I look to find at Asuncion a nucleus of men intolerant of servitude who may admit me to their

councils; a body of bold men, his enemies, from whom a revolution may grow. Can you guide me to such a body of men?"

"We are such a body of men," Don Gregorio spoke, now unsmiling, with a drawn, resolute face.

"And what is more," Padre Lisardo added, "I can guarantee for all of us that if you will come here again to-morrow after the siesta hour, you will find here all the tyrant's chief opponents, to the number of, say, thirty."

"And without suspicion either," Dr. Bargas perorated; "for even three dozen idlers is no unusual sight here, such is the popularity of my cheap and excellent Mendoza wine."

"Your immediate confidence in me," Hawthorne said, "is equally delightful and astonishing; I had expected suspicion and reluctance."

"Any stranger," Dr. Bargas orated, "would be an object of suspicion. But the guest of Don Vicente Mayorga, the friend of Don Luis Aldao and of Don Estéban Perrihon is no stranger, but a brother. You are one of ourselves. We trust you as ourselves."

Parlett, facing the door, began to hum his tune.

All assumed attitudes of vacuous idleness.

There entered two stout Guarani women, middle-aged but personable, neat and clean. Each had a big bundle on her head.

When the bundles were opened Dr. Bargas examined the leaf-tobacco, chaffered briefly in Guarani, deposited the tobacco in a *petacon*, fetched two baskets of Mendoza figs from his bedroom, handed one to each woman, took some coins from a drawer of his *bufete*, gave her share to each, and bowed them out as if they had been duchesses.

When they were quite gone Don Gregorio spoke.

"We hear from Don Tomas that my godson, Don Beltran Jaray, reached Asuncion to-day with you by the same ship. If he is like his father, if he has fulfilled the promise he gave ten years ago, if he has acquired the learning and experience for which his grandmother sent him to Europe, he might be an invaluable addition to our meeting to-morrow."

"I do not think," Hawthorne meditated, "that we can

count on Beltran. In fact, I fear we must reckon him against us. But I do not know. After four months on ship-board with Beltran I know his political opinions and his purposes as little as he knows mine. He is deep, is Beltran, for all his genial goodfellowship, his sunny talkativeness. He chatters cheerily, but he keeps his own counsel. Our talk on politics has been all vague generalities. Expressions of main principles and leading tenets, which might be applied either way to any specific condition in Paraguay or elsewhere.

"As soon as I met him at Buenos Aires I realised that I could not be open with him. From his conversation on ship-board, at Señor Aldao's house at Santa Fé, at Señor Perrichon's at Corrientes, I infer that he is greatly under the domination of the personality of the late French Emperor and of Napoleon's theories of government, of the idea of one-man rule. I also gather that he was greatly disgusted with the character of the Spaniards as he knew them in Spain, and feels contempt for the nobles as men, administrators and soldiers. I know he is greatly incensed against the restored king for his treatment of all who sided with the French, lumping together men who fought at Baylen or Saragossa and joined Joseph Bonaparte after his second return to Madrid only from motives of policy with the contemptible tools of Godoy, who betrayed their country to Bonaparte in the first instance, classing all together as *Afrancesados*. This has embittered him against the monarchy.

"And besides, he speaks of independent Paraguay with all a Porteño Creole's enthusiasm for an independent Buenos Aires.

"Yet he is a most devout Catholic, shocked at any contravention of the church's authority. Likewise he seems more than theoretically convinced that government, of whatever form, must rest on the satisfied approbation of all the population governed.

"Also he certainly changed sides positively in Spain, fighting furiously for the insurrection and zealously for the *juntas* and Cortes; yet being also a vigorous partisan of the French after he was disgusted with the incompetence and self-seeking of the patriots.

"Whichever party he joins must keep him by keeping

his approbation. I think he will side with our arch-foe. But we might win him over yet."

"At any rate," said Padre Bogarin, "we shall not consider him to-morrow. We must have here none but men we can thoroughly depend on and only the most important of those."

"Besides," Dr. Bargas twinkled, "if we took to inviting your godsons, Gregorio, we should betray ourselves. This shop would not hold them."

"No," Parlett added, "nor the *patio*, not if they were piled up like firewood to the top of the wall."

Don Gregorio beamed.

"I am popular as a godfather," he acknowledged.

"We meet here, then," Padre Bogarin resumed, "after the siesta hour to-morrow."

All signified agreement.

Hawthorne stood up.

"It is near sunset," he said, "and I must be going."

"Let me go with you," said Don Gregorio with a sort of air of all-enveloping protection. "I go close by Don Vicente's."

## CHAPTER VII

### BATHING BY MOONLIGHT

OUTSIDE Hawthorne started along the built-up street by which he had come. But Don Gregorio indicated the turn to their right, around the wall of the *patio*.

"Doubtless," he said, "you came along the Plaza. This way is a trifle longer but pleasanter."

They entered a small, open triangle, a high bank before them, topped by a cactus hedge. Keeping the bank to the left they ascended a narrow street, with low orange-shaded walls opposite the hedge and bank.

As they climbed, Don Gregorio began tentatively:

"Am I to understand that you were not very friendly with Beltran?"

"Quite the reverse," Hawthorne disclaimed with warmth. "So amicable that our reticence with each other as to our personal political views cast no shade over our friendship. I would wager my life that I have no better

friend than Beltran. I am sure there is no man I love more completely. He is the most charming fellow on earth. His mere presence seems to change the weather from foul to fair, he puts all of us in such a good humour with ourselves and all the world. I never met any one with such a faculty for conciliating at once, without saying or doing anything, the good will of all mankind."

"And womankind?" Don Gregorio queried.

"Quite as conspicuously," Hawthorne assured him. "At Buenos Aires he was deluged with invitations to dinners and *tertulias*, dances and balls. The women were really daft about him. At the palace receptions he was, you might say, mobbed, and created a real sensation.

"But that is scarcely a wonder for so handsome and gallant a young scholar and soldier. His universal success with the men was the marvel to me. He was so tactful that he gave no offence, managed himself so that no woman made a fool of herself over him any more than any made a fool of him. Not a duel with any brother, husband or lover; not even one quarrel."

"He must have his father's discretion," Don Gregorio remarked as they topped the hill. The last rays of the sun, as it sank below the swells of the Gran Chaco, struck on them across the lower reaches of the river and the down-stream suburbs. They turned to their left round a medium-sized house.

"His father's discretion," Don Gregorio repeated.

"It does not seem to be only discretion," Hawthorne amplified. "It is a sort of higher faculty of the heart and soul rather than of the mind. He does it all without thinking of it. And his effect on men is instantaneous. The labourers on the streets, the wharf-stevedores, all seemed to worship him at sight. It was a perpetual wonder to me on the river to see his influence with the crew. The pilot was a rough Basque, the boatswains Catalan Creoles, coarse and brutal, the sailors Payaguá Indians. From the *vaqueano* himself to the last Payaguá they were perpetually watching for a chance to serve Beltran, for a word from him, for a look. If he spoke to a Payaguá the whole day seemed a festival to the fellow."

"You make me proud of my godson," Don Gregorio said.

"You have a right to be," Hawthorne affirmed. "He was to the fore in the outbreak against Godoy. He fought in the guerrilla insurrection from the first. He was at Baylen. And the very day after the surrender he left Baylen with Don Ruy Guzman, the younger brother of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and rode with him fifteen leagues a day half across Spain to Saragossa. With Don Ruy he slipped through the French lines into the city. He had three weeks of house to house fighting and was wounded in the last assault before the truce. He stuck it out through the second siege and was all but killed in the explosion of the Madre de Dios bastion. He was in the hospital at Palafox's own home when the city surrendered.

"And he had any number of hairbreadth escapes after that, and any amount of fighting. He was in Cadiz during the second siege."

Hawthorne stopped and stared ahead of him down the slope of the wide, uneven, irregular road-way. As well as he could see in the short, quickly fading twilight, it ended in a broadish swamp, grown up with greenery like bamboos, bulrushes and sedge.

"There is a path through that," Don Gregorio assured him, "and a log across the brook. Just follow me."

When they were clear of the rank marsh-plants Don Gregorio turned on Hawthorne a smile of sentimental pride.

"My godson is a hero indeed. He has had experiences. I must ride out to-morrow to Itapuá and hear more from his own lips."

Hawthorne, meditating on the contrast between Don Gregorio's courtly bearing and foppish attire, and the primitive squalor of the festering swamp and rough log foot-bridge, said nothing.

Through the gathering dusk came the sounds of a guitar, strummed far off, and of another being tuned in a house near by.

Suddenly Hawthorne realised he knew his surroundings. He recognised, even in the moonlight now already stronger than the fading twilight, the corner where he had encountered the octoroon girl. Simultaneously he looked for and noticed a subtle change in Don Gregorio's manner.

"Unless your road is still mine," he said, "I can find

my way quite well alone from here. I know this street already."

Don Gregorio, however, insisted on accompanying him to the very door of Don Vicente's abode.

In the *patio* of the Mayorga mansion Hawthorne found all the family assembled, and augmented by a score or more of guests. All were taking *maté* or smoking. All rose, even the ladies, and Hawthorne was presented to more Dons, their wives, and the numerous sons and daughters. The gentlemen, Hawthorne noticed, now wore, not knee-breeches, but long, loose white trousers like the less-fashionable men of the populace whom he had seen as he passed along the streets. The ladies wore the eternal and eternally becoming and seemingly *tupois*, to which Hawthorne was already accustomed.

Most of the gentlemen and nearly all the ladies acknowledged the introduction in very broken Spanish, or out and out in Guarani.

Among the few who spoke Castilian, and who, when all were reseated, happened to be near him, were a fat old gentleman, Don Baltasar Figueredo, and his wife, Doña Encarnacion, a tall and sprightly young woman, evidently much her husband's junior.

Don Baltasar spoke perfect Spanish and remarked affably:

"You and I ought to be good friends, Señor Don Guillermo, for my wife is almost, one might say, a distant cousin of yours, as it were. You cannot see in this darkness, but she is a *rubia*, the only *rubia* in Asuncion, and has fair hair and blue eyes, like yourself. This makes us almost cousins, as it were. I trust we shall see you often at our house."

Hawthorne made some inarticulate attempt to acknowledge the geniality of this novel idea, as Doña Encarnacion smiled at him over her long cigar, but he was instantly buttonholed from the other side by a chirpy little lady with flashing black eyes, whose name he had not caught, but whom he afterwards knew well as Doña Pancha Jovelanos.

"Señor Don Guillermo," she said, barely removing her cigar from her lips, "I hear that you came up the river on the same ship with Ventura Velarde. Is it really true

that she's back in Asuncion, unmarried, after all these years?"

"Señorita Velarde is certainly," Hawthorne said, "as unmarried as when she went away."

"I call that a perfect scandal," Señora Jovellanos commented, at large, with the air of taking the whole company for audience. "To be twenty-six years old and unmarried is not good Christian behaviour. The girl ought to be ashamed of herself."

"Angelica is twenty-five," Doña Encarnacion interjected reprovably.

"Oh, well," Doña Pancha shrilled, "we all know why Angelica is not married yet. That is altogether different and does her credit. Rather than risk the faintest aspersion of changeableness a woman ought to wait any length of time for a man, even if there has been no formal engagement between the families, nor even any definite understanding between the two. Ventura wasn't bound to anybody, not by the faintest shadow of an obligation. She always held her head high and never let anybody so much as look at her. That was all very well if she was to make a great match in Spain, which is what everybody supposed was the reason for her crossing the ocean. If she is not married by now there must be something the matter with her. Has she lost her good looks?"

"She is the most really beautiful woman," said Hawthorne fervently, "the only really beautiful woman I ever saw."

"That shows the foolishness, the imbecility," Doña Pancha cried, "of her father sending her off travelling, wandering up and down the ocean and rambling about strange countries. That sort of thing makes a girl less attractive to men instead of more so. What is the use of travel and learning if it does not get a girl a husband early in life? If she had stayed at home she'd have been married long ago. Such blasphemous folly makes a girl incapable of really attracting men."

"I do not think she is incapable of attracting men," Hawthorne smiled.

"If she isn't," Doña Pancha demanded, "why hasn't she caught a man? If she couldn't catch one in Spain, she might, at least, be engaged to Beltran after four



months on the same ship with him. Are they engaged?"

"Nothing could be farther from her intentions or his," Hawthorne replied, "as far as I know or could judge from their behaviour."

"The most beautiful woman you ever saw," Doña Pancha commented. "Unmarried and unattached, four months on the river with the best catch in Asuncion and hasn't caught him. A girl certainly must lose her womanliness travelling, as I have always maintained. Didn't I tell you all Angelica had nothing to fear from Ventura?"

"It seems to me," Doña Encarnacion cut in across Hawthorne, "that you are not very consistent, Pancha. Almost in one breath you praise Angelica for waiting for Beltran and decry Ventura for not catching him. How could Ventura catch Beltran when he was partly promised to Angelica?"

"I don't see any inconsistency," Doña Pancha maintained. "A girl is bound to wait for her betrothed. But any girl not betrothed is free to take any man away from any woman, if she can. If she does not, it is because she can't."

They continued to debate the point, and the debate spread. Amid the confusion of Spanish and Guarani Hawthorne sat silent.

Presently Desiderio Mayorga beckoned him aside and said:

"We are all going to bathe in the river. You had best change into a pair of trousers like the rest of us. You will find a pair in your room in case you have no linen trousers of your own and think they will fit you well enough. There is a belt with them."

When Hawthorne came out again into the *patio* there was a chorus of voices in Guarani and in Spanish, amid which babel Hawthorne could hear:

"The late Recaldes!"

"Late as usual!"

"Next door and come last!"

Hawthorne was presented to Don Antonio Recalde, his wife, Doña Tules, and their numerous offspring, of whom he chiefly noticed a tall, graceful Señorita Angelica and an equally tall and somewhat slenderer Señorita Concha.

They set forth, each lady accompanied by her maid,

carrying towels and a quantity of feminine garments. There were valets for the gentlemen, nearly as numerous as the maids.

As they straggled out of the courtyard, all chattering at once and everybody standing aside for everybody else, Hawthorne found himself walking with Concha Recalde. In front of him Desiderio was with Angelica just behind her parents. There was something in Desiderio's attitude as he walked, in the way he leaned towards Angelica, in the tones of his voice as they talked together, which struck Hawthorne with a thrill of recognition and comprehension. He perceived, what he had already divined by intuition, that, as among the old-fashioned families at Buenos Aires and universally at Santa Fé and Corrientes, young ladies, closely guarded and unapproachable at all other times, might be conversed with to any extent at table or when walking abroad with their parents. He saw that Desiderio was making the most of his opportunity. He, himself, was awkwardly groping for a lead in conversation with Miss Concha when she supplied it by saying:

"Who was the first person you spoke to in Asuncion? We have a saying here that one's luck in a new city depends on that."

"A Dr. Parlett——" Hawthorne began, when Miss Concha interrupted, clapping her hands.

"Good luck!" she cried. "Good luck for you. Don Tomas is a wonderful man. Mamma's nurse, old Marta, was dying of lockjaw. Grandmamma had all the doctors in to see her, one after the other. Don Arsenio, Don Fructuoso, all said the same thing, that no one ever survived *pasmo real*, that sufferers always died. Then Grandmamma said perhaps the foreign doctor could help. I do not know what Don Tomas did to Marta or what medicine he gave her; I believe he will not tell, but she recovered entirely. Don Tomas is a real wizard."

They had turned to the right when they left the house, the Franciscan Monastery a big, black mass under its irregular roof-outlines, before them with the half-moon high above it. They turned to the left when they came to the earth bank bounding its enclosure, and straggled through crooked streets, so shaded by orange trees that the moonrays hardly struggled through here and there.

Through the half darkness guitars sounded in all directions from the houses about them. Turning yet again to the left, they passed several low buildings till the moon was shining at them, over the roof of the Cathedral. Just beyond the Cathedral the way sloped down and brought them by an irregular broadening stony gully to the harbour-side, where there was a stretch of clean sand beach bordered by an expanse of smooth, weedless sward set with a number of trees, which by moonlight looked to Hawthorne like locust trees.

In the moonrays the spars of the brigs and brigantines showed romantically black against the low stars. The flanks of the ripples all across the harbour shone with dancing sparkles of silver light. So brilliant was the moon that it was not only possible to make out the long shape of the wooded islet beyond the harbour, but far across the broad river one could descry the black masses of the rolling hillocks of the Gran Chaco.

At the water-edge some hundred or more people were bathing, the gentlemen a trifle up-stream from the ladies. Hawthorne beheld the ladies of his party enter the water as they were clad, merely kicking off their slippers, which the slave girls picked up.

The gentlemen likewise kicked off their footgear for the servants to retrieve, and then unconcernedly pulled off their shirts over their heads and handed them to their attendants. Hawthorne, by Desiderio Mayorga, did the like, and was soon splashing with the rest in the water. All talked at once, the ladies squealed and shrieked their delight, burst into peals of laughter at the jokes the gentlemen shouted at them, shrilled other jokes in return, at which the gentlemen roared with amusement. It was a simple-hearted, primitive, yet courtly kind of revelry which Hawthorne watched and shared.

As they were swimming about a voice from among the men declaimed:

"O moon, supreme by yon most excellent star,  
Were all supreme, most excellent things so far,  
We should be much more happy than we are."

Instantly, and in a tone mimicking his precisely, a silvery feminine voice sounded across the interval of water.

"O mouth, unlocked so near our governed city,  
If one I shall not name is told your ditty,  
Your fate may rouse but will not merit pity."

That started a cross fire of impromptu verses that ran crackling up and down the bathing-shore, now among the men, again among the women, mostly shuttle-cocking from the ones to the others. Hawthorne was astonished at the facility with which they were reeled off; amazed at their wit, point, and perfect smoothness of wording, and astounded at the quickness with which each sally was capped.

Salvos of laughter and applause greeted most of the epigrams. Hawthorne joined in the laughter over some of the Spanish verses, and in all the applause, though the loudest cheers were for Guarani witticisms which he could not catch.

When they began to leave the water, the valets stood in a sort of row across the beach, forming, as it were, a screen between the gentlemen and ladies, and skilfully proffering dry garments.

When dressed the gentlemen stood about in groups, even calling remarks back and forth to the ladies, who, without any intervening row of domestics, were dexterously dry-clad by their maids by the neat method of having a fresh *tupoi* thrown over their heads and slipping off their wet garment underneath it.

One of the first gentlemen dressed began playing a guitar. At once everybody took up the tune and the dressing continued and was completed to a succession of chorused songs.

Slowly pacing homeward as they went, Hawthorne thought the ladies even more beautiful with their long black hair floating behind them, trailing at least to the knees of every one he could see; and, from the head of Señorita Angelica, almost to the ground.

Then they sat about the *patio* taking more *maté* and smoking more cigars. The men's small cigars the servants brought in boxes. But each of the señoras had her slave-girl sitting by her, with a lapful of moist tobacco leaves which she rolled into such huge cheroots as the ladies preferred, and handed to her mistress as wanted.

The guitarist of the waterside was one of the party and they had more glees to his twangling accompaniment.

After nearly an hour of talk and songs, they entered the dining-room brilliantly lit with many wax candles, and, it seemed to Hawthorne, unendurably hot. No one else seemed to mind the heat, though the men undressed as at the midday meal. They amazed him by attacking vigorously a hot supper, almost as generous as the feast set before them for dinner. There was *olla* again, and again roast fowls and partridges and stewed pigeons. Everybody drank wine by the gobletful, everybody ate watermelon by the half melon at once.

As at dinner, there were verses and a storm of *pelotitas* till they banked up in little drifts in the corners against the wall and fairly hid the floor.

Under cover of the merriment and chatter, Doña Pancha, who sat next Hawthorne, returned to the charge.

"Will you please explain to me, Señor Don Guillermo," she said, "how it is possible for two healthy, handsome young folks like Beltran and Ventura, both fancy-free (for I don't believe Beltran was ever in earnest about Angelica), to spend four months on a ship together without falling in love?"

"I fancy," Hawthorne said, "that you grandes of this part of the earth have very little else to occupy you besides matrimony and marriage. Beltran and Ventura have seen a great deal of the world and of very different parts of the world. They were certainly glad to encounter each other at Buenos Aires, each the first compatriot the other had seen for years. But from the first and certainly at first, their heads were far too full of other interests to leave any room for gallantry and coquetry."

"Ah, Señor Don Guillermo!" Doña Pancha broke in on him archly. "In those words, 'certainly at first,' I scent your ultimate confirmation of all my surmises."

"When I come to the end of what I have to say," Hawthorne retorted, "you will find no corroboration of your conjecture. From the first they talked of other matters, and at first of altogether different subjects."

"To begin with, each had had a vast variety of novel experiences, many adventures, and not a few trials and dangers. Neither had had so far any opportunity to re-

count these happenings to sympathetic ears. While their paths had crossed, they had been in the same localities at very different times. Everything either had to tell was novel to the other. Beltran's adventures in Spain, Portugal, and France, Ventura's in those countries and also in England and in my native land were wonderfully interesting in themselves. Each had been captured by the enemy; Ventura twice at sea and Beltran five times on shore. Each had been more than once in imminent danger of death. Beltran's narrative, no matter how modestly related, bristled with startling heroisms.

"Their past was a topic not soon talked out.

"Their future was equally absorbing. Ventura's dominant idea was to be of use to her father; that she must repay him all he had done for her by using for his benefit the talents his wisdom and generosity had developed in her, must make him glad of, never regretful for, the bountiful liberality which he had lavished on her."

"Bountiful fiddlesticks!" Doña Pancha interrupted. "Her stepmother wanted her out of the way, and wheedled the old fool into thinking it was his idea to imitate *comadre* Isquibel, and, since he had no son or grandson, send his heiress to Europe."

"At any rate," Hawthorne pursued, "Ventura's all gratitude, and bent on helping her father."

"How could she help him?" Doña Pancha demanded.

"She says that a full third of his legitimate profits are stolen by his overseers, that it is so on all Paraguayan *estancias*, that she could soon introduce methods which would put a stop to all such pilferings."

"Perhaps she could," Doña Pancha fairly snorted, lighting a fresh cheroot. "But she'd make more trouble than she cured. Such European ideas won't go down in Paraguay, and the idea of a woman getting such notions! It proves how silly travel is for women."

"She is wrapped up in her dream," Hawthorne finished, "pictures her father longing for her and counting the days till she comes home."

"Much he longs or counts," Doña Pancha sneered. "He never thought of her except at remittance-time and then reckoned any sum cheap to get her off his mind. She'll find him entirely content with his third wife. Fancy

a girl wasting her thoughts on her father instead of making the most of her youth and opportunities."

"She talked incessantly of her father," Hawthorne said, "to Doña Juanita and to me as well as to Beltran."

"I'll wager they talked of other matters, too," Doña Pancha sniffed.

"Beltran talked a good deal of his future," Hawthorne said. "He's as full of a sense of duty as Ventura. Only while she thinks of her father only, he dreams of putting the fruits of his training in the arts of war, diplomacy and government at the service of his country."

All the colour faded out of Doña Pancha's cheeks.

At the instant the room resounded with explosions of laughing and shouting over the boisterous amenities of the battle with *pelotitas*. One could hardly hear any voice in the babel.

Yet Doña Pancha sunk hers almost to a whisper.

"For Heaven's sake, Señor Don Guillermo," she implored, "be discreet. If that were repeated where it would do harm, Beltran would be shot before noon to-morrow."

"I did not specify any particular kind of service to his country," Hawthorne disclaimed.

"The phrase in itself is enough and too much," Doña Pancha admonished him. "You have said it twice now; it might have been overheard even in this hurly-burly."

"Surely we are all faithful friends together!" Hawthorne exclaimed.

"Not surely at all," she maintained vigorously. "No one trusts a large gathering at Asuncion any longer. In particular I don't trust Venancio. The Lopez blood is bad blood. He has gambling debts off and on and is always in need of money. Talk of something safer."

"You can see, at least," Hawthorne persisted, edging away from the forbidden ground, but not changing the subject, "that two young folks occupied with reminiscences, canvassing of cherished purposes and philosophical discussions, are far from making love."

"I can see nothing of the kind," Doña Pancha maintained emphatically, "and you would see exactly the reverse if you had sense. Talking philosophy, plans and recollections is all love-making when young folks talk together."

"If it was," Hawthorne asseverated, "neither Ventura nor Beltran knew it."

"That's the worst kind of love-making," the bright-eyed little lady summed up, "when neither knows of it. And I'll wager they talked of love, too, when you were not in hearing."

"Sometimes when I was in hearing," Hawthorne admitted. "But there is the greatest difference between talking of love and talking love."

"Not so much as you imagine," she rejoined.

"You would have said they were far from being lovers," Hawthorne insisted, "if you had seen them on the deck, say over a game of chess."

"Chess!" Doña Pancha exclaimed. "That old man's game! That game for priests and jurists! Faugh! How unwomanly travel makes a girl!"

At this moment there was a cry for silence. The guitarist, the amazingly handsome Don Venancio Lopez, whom Doña Jovellanos had disparaged, began an air. He had an infectious gaiety and played in a very catchy manner. In a moment he had them all singing in chorus. When he broke one string he retuned the remainder and managed to elicit melodies quite as effective as before.

It was near midnight when the party broke up.

In Hawthorne's dreams Don Gregorio led him amid infinite wildernesses of bamboos, through contracted paths, where the foliage brushed their faces, along narrow log bridges over countless brooks. Always he saw the perfect fitting drab shoulders of his guide pushing aside the greenery just ahead of him, the silver tip of his long rapier-scabbard tapping along the bark of the interminable logs of his night-mares.

## CHAPTER VIII

DON BERNARDO VELASCO

**N**EXT morning Hawthorne was wakened early by a tap on his door.

Don Vicente entered without his sword, but otherwise fully dressed.



"I grieve to disturb you, Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "but you have a visitor."

"I!" Hawthorne exclaimed, astonished.

"Do not be alarmed," Mayorga said. "It is not one of the emissaries of our Dictator. Your early caller is our ex-Governor, who is such an early riser himself that he can hardly realize that any one is ever abed after dawn. We shall have him to breakfast, of course, and then we three can talk in my library."

The ex-Intendente Hawthorne found in the *patio*, walking up and down under the arcade. He was a tall, spare, fragile-looking old man, whose military bearing and lifelong erect carriage were now manifestly yielding to the approach of infirmities not yet upon him. He had a barely perceptible stoop, was just a trifle bent, and tottered ever so little as he walked, his head, whenever he spoke, giving the faintest suggestion of the palsied nodding of the very old. He wore a silver-hilted court-rapier, in a black-leather sheath, silver-tipped. From head to foot he was in black, except for a mere rim of white-lace ruffle at his wrists and neck, and a small white-lace cravat over his shirt-frill. Threadbare and darned his garments were, but scrupulously clean, evidently brushed with loving care and worn with simple dignity. In his hand he held a black cocked hat much faded. His hair was thin and straggled in silvery waves about his temples. Wrinkled and yellowed as his face was, it had a pinkish tinge of elderly health; over his aquiline nose peered eyes, red-rimmed but not bleared, rather bright and twinkling; and although his mouth was never quite closed, there was no hint of senility about the thin lips. From his every attitude one inferred kindly instincts, his expression was a smile of good-will to all the world. He was the incarnation of genteel poverty, and courtly benignity. Hawthorne felt at first glance that he was above all a lovable old man.

"Don Bernardo," their host said, as soon as the introductions, compliments, and snuff-takings were over, "will tell you after breakfast why he has come."

Breakfast was merely *chipá* bread, fruit, milk and *maté*. There was chocolate also, but it appeared to have been served chiefly for Hawthorne, who relished it, and for Don Bernardo, who enjoyed it manifestly, even pathetically.

Over it he queried:

"Do you ever shoot partridges in your country, Don Guillermo?"

"Sometimes," Hawthorne replied, "at the season when they are abundant."

"In Paraguay," the old man declared, "there is no season at which they are not abundant. I should be charmed to have you go shooting with me the first morning you can arrange for."

"I have no fowling-piece," Hawthorne demurred.

"Never mind." Don Bernardo beamed, "I have two, or I can borrow Jenofonte's for you, if mine do not suit you."

"I am sure they would suit me," Hawthorne bowed.

"Lack of a gun need never be an obstacle to going shooting near Asuncion," the old man went on. "That is, if you would really enjoy partridge shooting."

"I am sure I should enjoy it greatly," Hawthorne asseverated.

The old Intendente's face lit up still brighter.

"Ah, Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "it is a pity that anything keeps any one indoors a morning like this! A good fowling-piece, a good Malvinas pointer, a good friend to share the joys of sport and the open country, wind and sunshine, that's really living!"

After breakfast, which was soon done with, their host led the way to the same room where he and Hawthorne had talked on the previous morning.

Hawthorne having heard it called a library, looked about for justification of the title. Besides red-backed account-books he saw none except two folios, one de Mariana's History of Spain, the other las Casas' History of the Indies, a quarto Don Quixote, a Spanish translation of Buchan's Domestic Medicine, and one small volume which he afterwards found was the adventures of Lazarillo de Tormes.

These were in the upper-section of the desk-cabinet, much like Dr. Bargas' *bufete*, but simpler and less ornate.

Don Bernardo declined a cigar, and Hawthorne, though he took one, let it go out at once.

For the old man, in a sort of flutter of solicitude, began as soon as they were seated.

"I beg of you not to consider my visit an intrusion, Señor Don Guillermo."

Hawthorne disclaimed any such feeling, and he went on:

"Lisardo came to me by moonlight last night and told me of your astounding purposes in coming to Asuncion. I questioned him as to what had passed at the wine-shop. I said to myself:

"'This rash or inspired lad must to-morrow at nine o'clock visit the most redoubtable man alive. At best, he can be but poorly equipped for such an encounter. He should have every possible advantage in a strait where the slightest error of word, tone or look may arouse his adversary to a capricious fury which may be the stranger's ruin. If Vicente has done no better than Jenofonte and his cronies, the lad knows worse than nothing of his antagonist. He should, at least, be in possession of a full comprehension of the man against whom he pits himself.'

"With this in mind, I came here early, routed my good Vicente out of a luxurious bed and questioned him. It seems to me that all that has been told you of the man is far more likely to bewilder you than to aid you. I have come to try to help you, if my intention pleases you. If it does not please you, we may talk of other matters, or I shall withdraw, as you prefer."

"Your kindness overwhelms me, Señor Don Bernardo," Hawthorne said, "and I beg you to remain. I seem to have not a confused but a very definite and consistent idea of the man's complicated individuality and contradictory traits. But I have gained no inkling of how he won the popularity that has made him absolute. That is what I want to know: the basis of his power, the method of its acquisition."

"That," said Bernardo, "I may make clear if you will bear with an old man's diffuseness and verbosity."

He put his head on one side, stared at vacancy over Hawthorne's shoulder, and began:

"When I was promoted from being governor of Misiones to be Intendente of Paraguay, I found Asuncion much unsettled by Don Lazaro Espinosa's vagaries and ferocities. The discontent of the Creoles needed an effective sedative. I judged the appointment of popular and trusted men to the Cabildo the best means of conciliation. While considering candidates, I was much impressed by a young advocate——"

Don Bernardo's voice sank. He looked around. He continued, almost in a whisper:

"Doctor José Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia."

He drew a deep breath and sighed profoundly.

"I was very much taken with the young man's appearance, behaviour and personality. I was impressed by the current gossip concerning his erudition, astuteness, rectitude and frugality. My interest was aroused by the mystery that hung about him, the atmosphere of reticent secretiveness which enveloped him. Even in those days, he inspired among the natives an implicit confidence and awe-struck reverence amounting to superstitious adoration and already showing signs of the positive idolatry into which it has since developed. But most of all was I struck with his seemingly inherent faculty for evoking vehement partisanship in every human being—Indian, Mulatto, Guarani, Creole or Spanish—who knew him or knew of him. No one was lukewarm towards him, no one indifferent. Not one calm, impartial, apparently unbiased account of him did I hear. He aroused enthusiastic admiration or infuriated enmity. He was either lauded or vilified. In particular, a majority of the better class of our citizens seemed to me so completely envenomed against him that even unconsciously they were uniformly his traducers.

"I made special enquiries concerning his origin and antecedents.

"In the process of these investigations I perceived that many of the reports from my official secret agents were coloured by the same peculiar tendency I had noticed in general conversation: I detected a manifest proneness towards blackening his character even by the recital of improbabilities, fantastic innuendoes or downright fabrications. The chief of these concerned his name, his age, the years he had spent away from Asuncion, and his moral character.

"I found that his father, the son of a Frenchman who had emigrated to Brazil, had been imported by Don Marcos Larrazabal to superintend his experimental plantations for the introduction of Brazilian black tobacco. His brothers, whom he brought with him as overseers, called themselves simply Rodriguez, whereas he always used the name of Garcia Rodriguez de França, as he spelled it when he

settled at Yaguaron, where the biggest of Larrazabal's plantations was located. But after he married Petrona Caballero, in fact, in his signature to the marriage papers, he dropped the 'de' and spelled it Francia.

"He and Petrona had a numerous progeny, fully a dozen boys and a half-dozen girls, of whom the most grew up.

"In 1785, under Don Joaquin de Alos, through the influence of Bishop Juan José de Priego y Caro, they had the opportunity to send one of their sons to the University of Cordova de Tucuman. Now it was represented to me that their son José Gaspar, who was then over twenty-two and unmarried, was little better than a dolt, while their much younger son Pedro was the cleverest of their large family; that they effected an interchange, easily inducing the clever Pedro to pass himself off as José Gaspar and compelling the simpleton José Gaspar to submit to the exchange of names; that the real José Gaspar, the only son entitled by his age to an education at Cordova, was relegated as Pedro to the tobacco fields and the real Pedro sent off as José Gaspar to the university. I myself cannot conceive how the sons of so well-known a personage as the general superintendent of government tobacco plantations, after the younger man was rising fifteen, could be secretly interchanged, with no outcry among the hundreds who must have known both, without detection, betrayal and exposure, without even a complaint, protest or suspicion. Nor can I conceive how a mere child of fourteen could pass himself off anywhere, least of all before the cool and experienced authorities and professors of one of the five great universities of the continent, as a youth of twenty-two, let alone as a man of twenty-eight, for some absurdly rumour that the genuine José Gaspar was twenty-eight at the time of the alleged exchange. However that may be, there is to this day the greatest diversity of opinion as to this man's true age, the divergences in the estimates amounting to fully fourteen years. When I first saw him his liveness and physical vigour, combined with his ascetic and sedentary habits and his appearance of erudition and gravity, made it impossible to form a fixed opinion. I could not feel that I was making a well-founded conjecture at any age between

thirty-two and forty-six, the extremes maintained by his champions and detractors.

"All accounts agreed that he had been expected to become a priest and had gone to Cordova intending to study theology, that he had devoted himself for some years to reading in divinity, that he became alienated from interest in religion and applied himself to law.

"Otherwise the reports were greatly at variance; that he had received the degree of doctor of laws in due course; that he had been expelled from the university for blasphemous conversation and disorderly life; that he had gone straight from Asuncion to Cordova and returned as directly; that he had spent most of his absence in travel, and visited Chuquisaca and studied at the university there, had crossed the Andes and been a student at the universities both of Cuzco and Lima, had sojourned at Buenos Aires; even that he had passed the ocean to Spain and spent a full year as a student at Salamanca. I could verify none of these conflicting rumours nor find any basis for the wilder.

"Certainly, when I came here as governor he had been established for more than ten years at Asuncion as a jurist and pleader, had been treated as a licentiate and accorded all the rights and privileges of a doctor of laws.

"It was stated to me that he had been very dissolute. I could descry no confirmation of this calumny in his appearance or behaviour. He was said to have been an admirer of this or that among our *peinetas de oro*, but I could not find any one who would affirm having seen him with one, either at her house or at a fiesta. No scandal, I found, connected his name with the disturbance of the domesticity of any respectable husband or father. The sole ground for these detractions appeared to be that he had offended the matchmakers of the capital and laid himself open to the slanders of busybodies by his morose, his almost surly, isolation since his one unfortunate love affair. He was undoubtedly ardently in love with Petrona Zevallos, and cruelly disappointed when she jilted him for Cayetano Machain.

"Our good Vicente informs me that he recited to you the story of his father's death. But he did not know the cause of the estrangement between father and son. It seems that

Captain Garcia Francia, having been at some small expense in fitting out his boy for the university, although his maintenance there had cost him nothing, expected his scholar son to be a lavish provider for all the family and all their wants and whims. The elder man seems not only to have had that attitude of mind towards position and opportunity which is the curse of all South America, not only to have held tenaciously to that conception of public service which is the disgrace of our Spanish colonies, but to have been particularly gross and blatant in his open expression of his views. This may have been natural to him, for he was not merely a Brazilian, but from the province and the very city of Rio de Janeiro; and this low moral spirit is, rightly or wrongly, imputed to *Brasileros* in general, to *Cariocas* especially, and to *Fluminenses* in particular. To him it was an axiom that a family pinched itself to make one member a public man in order that he might enrich himself by extortion, bribe-taking and sharp practices and pour the profits of his chicanery out upon his relations.

"When his son devoted himself, from his first return to *Asuncion*, to championing the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed, the unfortunate, his father flew into rages with him for his folly, his waste of time, his idiotic pursuit of profitless benevolence. When he saw him refuse handsome retainers from opulent rascals in cases likely to be endlessly lucrative, his fury knew no bounds. When his remonstrances were of no effect and his reproaches met no response except frigid contempt, he was beside himself. Father and son were completely estranged. Yet the superintendent fatuously clung to the conviction that his son must yield to his adjurations and come to what he regarded as his manifest duty; continued to expect from month to month that the young jurist would inevitably take to the very practices he so abhorred, and become a source of unbounded affluence to himself and all his relations. For this ever-anticipated outcome he regarded it as indispensable that he should remain unmarried.

"With this ridiculous hope ever before his eyes, he viewed with consternation his son's successful suit of *Petrona Zevallos* and her brothers' approbation. He conceived the perverted notion that his infatuation with *Petrona* was the sole obstacle to his becoming all he desired;

that he had but to make a marriage with her impossible to have Gaspar precisely what he wished.

"With this demented aim, taking advantage of the fact that Petrona was at the same time assiduously though hopelessly courted by Cayetano Machain, a distant cousin of his wife's family, the Caballeros, he vilely slandered his own son to Valeriano and Segundo Zevallos, who could not suspect the libel, coming from the suitor's father. In their indignation they told the tale to their sister, who, revolted at her lover's baseness, in the first blaze of her resentment married Cayetano Machain.

"It was this baseless slander of himself, this deception of the Zevallos brothers, this entrapping of Petrona into a loveless marriage, which embittered the son permanently and unalterably against his father, more or less against mankind, and certainly against all religion. From that time he never entered a church, and when, after he had spurned the ministrations of his pastor, Bishop Priego y Caro himself remonstrated with him, he said, blasphemously, that God either permitted such things to happen or was incapable of preventing them; that if he was impotent he was contemptible, while if he was indifferent he was wicked; that he would not bow the knee to a wicked or contemptible God. Bishop Priego was too kind-hearted to report his blasphemy to the Holy Office, and enjoined silence upon Padre Lisardo Bogarin, who had accompanied him upon his mission of mercy. The good Bishop hoped that his prayers and those of his clergy might work a change of heart in the rash lad. So he escaped the Inquisition.

"He became a sort of recluse at his country-house at Ibirai, but continued to be the comforter, counsellor and champion of orphans, widows, labourers, and especially of our timid and slow-minded convert villagers, our *Tapé* Indians of the *reduccions*, who are very timorous in all matters relating to law, dreading suits as incomprehensible, and courts as mere ante-chambers to the prisons. He was much sought also by persons able to pay liberally, but was reported never to neglect a poor client for a richer. He likewise had the reputation of never undertaking a case unless assured of its justice, and of never losing a case he undertook. He certainly prospered and became a man of



property, purchasing his cottage at Ibirai from his former landlord, adding to its garden several adjoining bits of land, and buying a modest dwelling in the city. He lived in a very parsimonious way, with the simplest food, clothing and furniture, immersed in his studies when not actually busied over the affairs of his clients.

Of course, I appointed him to the Council, where his integrity and ability won him a prominent position among his colleagues.

It was during his first year in the Cabildo that there occurred an incident altogether characteristic.

He had a cousin named Domingo Rodriguez, a rich man and very litigious in disposition. As soon as the present Dictator returned to Asuncion from the University of Cordova, Don Domingo retained him as his lawyer, and had him manage his frequent suits. After this relation of attorney and employer had subsisted for fully nine years, the present Dictator became restive concerning a suit over some pieces of land. On examining the papers, he found that the suit was a most ingenious and promising plot for unjustly gaining possession of the entire estate of Estanislao Machain of Lambaré, brother of the Cayetano Machain whom Petrona Zevallos had married. He at once returned the papers to Rodriguez and declined to have anything more to do with the suit. Domingo retained another less scrupulous lawyer, and won the preliminary action of the suit with ease against Estanislao, who managed his own case.

When the news of this reached the man of whom we are talking, he at once rode to Lambaré to the Machain farmstead. As the farmstead was isolated and as every horseman in Paraguay wears his sabre, Estanislao's servant thought the visitor had come to kill his master, knowing them to be enemies since Cayetano's marriage. The visitor reassured him gruffly, but nevertheless he warned his master. Estanislao put himself in a position for defence and would not believe his ears when he heard what his visitor had to say. He told him briefly that he would not remain inert and see any man robbed, that the case was sure to go against him all through if he persisted in trying to manage it for himself, whereas he could win for him to a certainty.

"With some reluctance Estanislao put the case in his hands.

"When the *juez de alzada*, the appeal-court judge, read the papers he had prepared, he at once told Domingo's lawyer that it was impossible, if the case was pushed thus, for him to avoid finding for Estanislao. Domingo at once procured a large bag of doubloons and rode out to Ibirairá.

"Hearing his visitor without interruption until he had said all he had to say and displayed the gold, he stood up, exclaiming:

"Get out of my house with your dirty insinuations and your dirty money!"

"After that, he pressed the case with vigour and Ma-chain retains his patrimony.

"I could recount of him many such anecdotes of exploits which cumulatively contributed to his reputation for disinterestedness, which spread among the common people until they looked up to him as a demigod. To this semi-deification his renown for erudition vastly conduced. He was actually, beyond peradventure, the most learned man not only in Paraguay, but in the entire Vice-royalty of Buenos Aires. No Spaniard, no Creole even, was so completely a master of the niceties of Guarani rhetoric; and their eloquence is no mean art, for among Guaranies not custom, tradition, law or rule determines collective action, but the persuasiveness of the speakers who address their meetings. In ease, accuracy and subtlety of expression in Spanish, whether written or spoken, he was without a peer. All our ecclesiastics read Latin, but not one is so completely at home in its entire literature. Two or three perhaps read a little Greek; to him Greek is as well known as Latin, and its writers his familiars. Some of us speak and read French; none with the completeness to which he has attained. Portuguese, which not many of us speak, he knows thoroughly. I believe he is the solitary Créole in the Vice-royalty who has any knowledge of Italian, German and English, all of which he reads without difficulty.

"His attainments in the natural sciences are equally marvellous. His knowledge of medicine is by no means contemptible; he is the most competent land-surveyor in Paraguay, and a capable architect. Vicente has told you of his addiction to mathematics and astronomy. He had

gathered a library not only surpassing any in the Viceroyalty, but I venture to hazard that if every book in existence in the whole region had been conveyed to Asuncion, his would have outnumbered all the rest. The peasantry, accustomed to no book save their pastor's breviary, regarded this wall-full of tomes, a modest collection by European standards, as a vast garner of supernatural lore, an arsenal of wizardry.

"Among the primitive Guarani heathens an eclipse was called *Yagua*, meaning dog in their tongue, from their fable that a great dog roamed about among the stars and now and again tried to swallow the sun or moon.

"He made a practice, after each eclipse, of announcing that there would be none again until a specified date; that on such and such a night the moon would be eclipsed, or on such and such a day, the sun. These predictions, always fulfilled, augmented his renown. He was spoken of among the Indians as *Yecoti Yagua*, which means in their language 'the friend of the dog.' The more ignorant believed that he could and did cause and prevent eclipses at will. The populace addressed him as '*Carai*,' a word meaning 'Lord' in Guarani, and applied formerly to the sorcerers of their ancestral paganism.

"It was inevitable that the man most looked up to by all classes of the population, who surpassed all our best in all kinds of learning, should be thought of for secretary of the provisional *junta* which took charge of the government after the Corsican's abasement of Spain had sapped loyalty to our king, after the revolt of Buenos Aires had cut us off from communication with our mother-country; after the defeat of the Porteño inroad had given Paraguay a sense of national existence and self-reliance; after association and conversation with Belgrano and his officers had scattered the seeds of republican ideas in Asuncion.

"There was some faint opposition, a quickly evaporating proposal of another candidate; but all very evanescent.

"The Generals all agreed he was the man for secretary even before they had decided which of themselves should be president of the board. They were on the point of sending for him when Don Prudencio la Guardia interposed and staggered them all by drily enquiring whether any one knew his political convictions or preferences.

"Not one of them did.

"Such had been the reticence and secretiveness of the man that not only Atanacio Cabañas, who had been his client, and Valeriano Zevallos, who had just missed being his brother-in-law, but even Jerman Caballero, his cousin, knew nothing of his sentiments. He might be an ardent loyalist or an advocate of union with Buenos Aires, for all they knew. They looked at each other with comical embarrassment. Even in my chagrin I almost laughed at them. It was not until Padre Melquiades Caballero, his uncle, declared he could vouch for his nephew's patriotism, for his unalterable aversion to kingly rule and hostility to Porteño pretensions, that he was unanimously chosen secretary of the *junta*.

"The moment he qualified as secretary it was evident that he was the government of Paraguay. I and Valeriano Zevallos, who had been chosen president chiefly because of the mutual jealousy of Yegros and Caballero, were totally unable to cope with him, had to withdraw any suggestion he disapproved of and accept any proposal he made.

"When the deputies to the first convention began to gather at Asuncion, it was evident that loyalty predominated among the delegates from the villages and at the same time it began to be evident that the troops had been zealous against the Porteño invasion quite as much from devotion to the King and detestation of the rebels at Buenos Aires as from pride in an independent Paraguay, and that they had not imbibed the ideas which swayed their generals and could not be depended upon to coerce the loyalist majority.

"At this moment when we confidently expected the convention to proclaim its fealty to the King and to affirm the unwavering allegiance of Paraguay to the mother-land, he dominated the convention by a trick, as Lisardo told you. Do not despise us too much; we were like the crew and mariners on the vice-admiral's ship of a hundred guns which was captured by a handful of buccaneers in an open boat, overwhelmingly superior in force but hopelessly out-manceuvred.

"He had, before the convention met, initiated and pushed with vigour an investigation of all departments of the government and unearthed an amazing number of matters as

to which my trusted subordinates had deceived me. His energy was prodigious. In a week he had replenished the treasury by prompt arrests, trials, and fines of all delinquents and their disgorging of their peculations. Within the same time the custom-house was returning revenue at a rate unheard of. The funds he at once used to pay all the troops. He visited the barracks and removed all grounds of complaint as to food, uniforms, housing and equipment. Zevallos, perceiving himself being supplanted in the affections of his men, plotted his destruction. But the genius of the man was more than a match for him. Not yet strong enough with the soldiery to oust Zevallos openly, backed by only a small minority of the delegates to the convention, he arranged with Yegros and Caballero to assist him in relegating me permanently to private life in exchange for the support of their troops against Zevallos and Cabañas, agreeing himself to drop out of sight altogether, thus making it easier to nullify my influence and that of Zevallos and Cabañas if our entire *junta* apparently retired voluntarily and completely.

"During the ascendancy of the *junta* of which Caballero was president, which he and Yegros were supposed to dominate, in which Don Fernando de la Mora and Padre Lisardo Bogarin were apparently powerful factors, while the machinery of the administration was nominally in the hands of Don Larios Galvan as secretary and Don Jacinto Ruiz as notary, yet our *compadre* Don Gregorio de la Cerda, as assessor, actually controlled everything in his easy-going way.

"Naturally, all the old abuses were soon in full swing, mutterings against favouritism heard from all classes, instances of extortion, bribery and oppression gossipped everywhere, and the soldiery sulky and grumbling, with their pay in arrears, their food bad and insufficient, their uniforms old and uncomfortable, and their barracks out of repair. The dishonesty of the administration might have been condoned, all South Americans have always been inured to dishonest officials; its obvious incompetence was unendurable. The better classes were humiliated and alarmed, the military discontented, the traders irritated, the poor in despair.

"At first a dribble of complainants, mostly labourers and

peasants, followed the road to Ibirai to the hermit who there sipped his *maté* or smoked his cigar at his littered table between the telescope and the terrestrial sphere.

"He listened, sympathised, shrugged his shoulders and counselled patience. He prepared papers for poor clients; briefed cases for all the advocates who consulted him; occasionally came into Asuncion to plead in some simple, unpolitical case; defending, for instance, a peon charged with murder; prosecuting civil suits for indigent women

"He resolutely declined to mix in any way in larger matters.

"The trickle, augmented by troopers, corporals, sergeants, merchants, landowners and gentlemen grew to a stream, a daily caravan. All the disgruntled of Asuncion sought him, contrasting the economy, justice and efficiency of his brief management of affairs with the confusion and discomfort of the existing régime. Day by day his influence grew until he was the darling of the soldiery, the idol of the commonalty, and the hope of the aristocracy.

"All this while he took no open part in any political intrigue and had, apparently, no hand in calling the second convention. By the time it met no file of soldiers in Paraguay could have been trusted to obey an order to arrest him. His prestige had snuffed out that of all competitors, and the generals dared not make any move against him, while no one else could even think of obstruction.

"Knowing the temper of the military, he arranged to have Yegros, the least clever, I might say the most stupid of the generals, elected consul, and himself added as a sort of an after-thought.

"Fulgencio told you what followed. And my good Vicente here has described to you the alteration in his demeanour. I myself think that the long habit of dealing with submissive Guaranies and his sense of immeasurable intellectual superiority to all men hereabouts have contributed to sharpen his natural intolerance of opposition. He sees in himself the destiny and happiness of Paraguay, feels a sort of divine sanction for any idea that enters his head, and infers a traitor in any one questioning a word of his.

"I came here with the wish that my uncoloured account of him might assist you in dealing with this least compre-

hensible, as he is the most formidable, man on the western continents. Any one else in Asuncion must colour anything he says of him with hate or fear. I do not hate him, although I raised him from insignificance to affluence and power, and he has supplanted me in the affections of my people and taken my place at their head. I do not hate him for having made me a pauper or for keeping me a prisoner in Paraguay to die alone far from Spain. I do not fear him, because I am beyond all fear. I am done with hope, because I have no future. I have before me only the interval through which I must wait till death comes to me. I am past any hope, save that I may meet my end as a Spanish gentleman should. But partisanship is as done with for me as anxiety. All my emotions are of the past. Even loyalty to my King is no more a motive to me to-day than the love I bore the dear wife who has prayed for me in heaven these thirty years. Concern for myself is as wholly of long ago as the tears I shed at those little graves where my Inez and I wept together. I am beyond dread or desire. I am without animus or bias, being, as it were, a disembodied spirit, expiating a part of my purgatory in this world. I am a living man, but for me life is over."

Hawthorne's eyes were full of tears. His compassion moved him to relieve the tension of the atmosphere by an American twist of jocosity.

"Except when shooting partridges," he said.

Don Bernardo smiled with a perfect comprehension of the sympathy prompting the diversion.

"Except when shooting partridges," he repeated, twinkling. "In the early dew, with a Malvinas pointer, life awakens even in my old veins."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LAIR OF THE LION

**S**TARTING as he had started for Dr. Bargas' wine-shop, Hawthorne turned to his right midway of Calle Comercio opposite the Cathedral tower, picked his way through the irregularities and litter of the Cathedral Plaza. Past the head of the dried gully, grown up with thorn-

bushes, separating the two, he entered the irregular Market-Plaza.

Facing him as he passed the squat Cabildo, he saw the long flank of the old Jesuit church, at the corner of Larrazabal's new Government House, of El Supremo's Palacio, which shared with the Cathedral the local honour of being one of the two grandest buildings in Asuncion.

The eaves of its red-tiled roof were scarcely lower than those of the Cathedral, and the jutting angle to the left, at the rear of the deconsecrated church nearest the Cabildo, showed a *mirador*, a second-floor balcony, in front of the upper of its two windows, the lower of which, with its wide-set bars, gave directly on the corner of the Market-Plaza, with no verandah outside it, only the semi-shelter of the overhanging *mirador*.

When Hawthorne turned the east corner of the Palacio, he scanned more carefully its river-front, which he had barely glanced at when he landed the day before. The apertures of the ground floor arcade were open. The verandahs were fully twelve feet wide; the windows under them all heavily barred, the walls whitewashed, the beams resting on the piers heavy and darkened by age.

Precisely at nine by his repeater Hawthorne presented himself at the entrance.

In the covered way leading to the inner quadrangle stood a Guarani sentinel, a tall grenadier's cap on his head, a very tight and very long-tailed blue coat buttoned closely on him, his legs in loose trousers, once white, his feet bare, an old flint-lock musket, with a broad-bladed bayonet, in his hands.

The sentinel halted Hawthorne. Sedate and tall, the young man stared back at him. He was no common or contemptible figure anywhere, and commanded the fellow's respect at once by his demeanour. In a barely intelligible mixture of halting Spanish and explosive Guarani, he civilly asked his business. On Hawthorne's repeating several times and very slowly that he was a foreigner wishing to pay his respects to El Supremo, the soldier turned his head and called into the courtyard:

"Bopí! Bopí!"

A one-eyed mulatto boy appeared and spoke in good Spanish. Hawthorne, in his stateliest and most orotund



Castilian, stated that he was an American of the North, the bearer of a personal letter of introduction from Señor Ponsonby Staples, consul at Buenos Aires of his Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland, to his Excellency the supreme Dictator of Paraguay.

The boy slouched away, his loose white trousers wagging over his bare feet, his ill-fitting white jacket flapping about his hips.

He soon returned and spoke in Guarani some words to the sentinel, who instantly brought his bayoneted musket, till then held horizontally across the passage, to the position of present-arms. Hawthorne followed the boy into the *patio*.

It was fully twice as long as it was wide, and was paved with red brick, except where some bare earth showed round the trunks of the twelve orange trees that shaded it.

Near the farther end of the courtyard, between two of the pillars of the shady side, was placed a huge arm-chair of some dark wood like ebony, much carved and inlaid with clumsy patterns in ivory and mother-of-pearl. Near it was a small rush-bottom chair without arms.

Between and a little behind the two chairs was a plain round table, littered with papers around a large silver ink-stand.

Before the two chairs stood a young man, his arms pinned behind him. On either side of him was a soldier, musket in hand. They had their backs to Hawthorne as he approached. Facing them and him in front of the large chair stood a man of slightly more than middle height, spare of figure, with a thin face, shaven and dead pale; a straight long nose sharp as a chisel, and keen black eyes, bright and piercing. Long ringlets of jet black hair fell over his shoulders. He wore a triangular black cocked hat, of the European fashion of many years before, a blue coat, embroidered with a great deal of gold braid and gold lace, much faded and tarnished, a buff waistcoat, buff knee breeches and white silk stockings. The knees of his breeches and his plain low shoes were adorned with large gold buckles. On his left hand he wore a thin gold ring set with three black diamonds.

He wore no other ornaments.

At his side hung a cavalry sabre with a brass hilt and

guard, and a black shagreen grip, in a plain black leather scabbard, tipped with brass.

Hawthorne recognized the Dictator, and bowed low, hat in hand. Francia fixed on him a browbeating gaze, which Hawthorne met full and unflinchingly, his figure erect in his most military pose.

"Who are you and what do you want?" the Dictator demanded in Spanish.

"Excelentísimo Señor," said Hawthorne, using his best delivery of his best Castilian, "I am a citizen of the United States of America, a countryman of General Washington. I am the bearer of a letter of introduction to you from the English King's consul at Buenos Aires. I desire the favour of an interview if it please you, Excelentísimo Señor."

"Pardon me, Señor Americano," said the Dictator, "if I keep you waiting for a moment."

He turned and Hawthorne's eyes followed him toward the young Spaniard, a youth of the full blood, and diabolically handsome, and who strongly reminded Hawthorne of some one he had seen since he reached Asuncion, but whom or where he could not recall.

The Dictator addressed him as '*Bribonazo*' (you big rascal).

"You acknowledge, *Bribonazo*," he enquired, "that the girl's story was true in all particulars?"

"The facts are as she stated," the Spaniard admitted.

The Dictator spoke some words in Guarani to the mulatto boy, who had stood near a pillar close by. He shambled off.

Almost at once he returned, followed by two soldiers like the sentinel at the entrance. They trailed their muskets unhandily. Between them they led an octoroon girl, the very girl Hawthorne had seen the day before running weeping down the street past Don Vicente's house.

She was decidedly pretty, though evidently weighed down under a load of misery. She stood there, full contoured, her small feet and trim ankles bare, polished and clean, her loosely-belted *tupoi* spotlessly white, her bosom heaving under its thin covering, her throat rippling as she swallowed often in a vain effort to keep her self-control, her face greyish with her emotions, her eyes lustreless, her braided hair neat on her small head, a pitiable figure be-

tween the ruffians. They held her each by one arm near her shoulders.

"Is this the man?" the Dictator questioned her in Guarani. Hawthorne knew that much Guarani. Also he knew enough to catch the vehement and emphatic affirmation of her passionate answer. Likewise, he understood the Dictator's curt:

"Take her away!"

Off she was marched as she had been led in. She had come in silence, she went in tears, her sobs echoing in the courtyard. As she was half carried, half dragged away, she threw her head from side to side.

"*Bribonazo*," the Dictator recommenced, his bird-of-prey eyes boring into those of the prisoner, "you acknowledge the facts, the victim identifies you. You are guilty. You shall be tied to a post in the market-place and given a hundred lashes on your bare back."

"This," the youth exclaimed, "is no fit punishment for a Spanish gentleman."

"Suppose," the Dictator acidly retorted, "your own sister had come to you on your father's *estancia* and told you of an octoroon on that estate, the same tale that octoroon has told of you, would you not have given him a hundred lashes on his bare back?"

"A hundred!" the demoniacal youth sneered. "I'd have had him given a thousand! I'd have had him lashed till he died!"

"Out of your own mouth," said the Dictator coldly, "you are condemned. Your punishment is, if anything, too light. Take your hundred lashes and be thankful."

"I had rather," the youth burst out, "be shot."

The Dictator's eyes narrowed to pin points.

"You had rather be shot!" he hissed. "You deserve death surely. You have chosen for yourself. Shot you shall be."

He turned to Hawthorne.

"Señor Americano," he said, "I have kept you standing too long because of this trifling affair. Be seated."

He motioned with a rather stiff gesture, awkwardly gracious, toward the smaller chair, thereupon seating himself in the arm-chair. So seated, he half turned, reached out a long, thin arm to the table, seized a quill pen, and dipped

it in the big silver inkstand. With his left hand he took a small book from the pocket of his waistcoat; opening it, he scribbled a few words on a leaf, tossed the pen on the table, tore the leaf from the book, and returned the book to his pocket.

Looking up, he saw the boy Bopî before him.

"Well?" he queried.

The mulatto answered in the vernacular.

"Show them in," the Dictator commanded.

Hawthorne saw cross the courtyard towards him two young Spanish gentlemen wearing the garb which creole self-respect in Asuncion appeared to require in defiance of the torrid climate. Save that one wore a red coat and green breeches and the other blue and orange, they were dressed alike: long-tailed, big-flapped, huge-cuffed, great-pocketed, many-buttoned coats of bright cloth, embroidered vests, satin knee-breeches, white silk stockings and gold-buckled shoes, the whole set off by slender court-swords in polished scabbards. Their cocked hats, gay-plumed, they carried, Hawthorne noted, in their hands.

As they approached, he recognized Don Nulfo Recalde and that Don Venancio Lopez, whose good looks, whose downright beauty he had remarked the night before at the supper after the bathing party. He instantly realized that the prisoner was Don Venancio's brother.

Before the Dictator the two bowed low.

"What do you want?" he enquired curtly.

"We have come," Don Venancio began, "to intercede for my brother Narciso."

"Intercessions," the Dictator snarled, "are an impertinence in all cases, and in this doubly so. The case has been heard, your brother is guilty, he has confessed, he has chosen his punishment himself, the matter is closed."

"We have come," Don Nulfo put in, "to plead with you that a Spanish gentleman should not be punished at all on the representations of a mere octoroon girl."

Francia leapt to his feet. Hawthorne, ceremoniously rising at the same time, watched him keenly. His attitude, gestures and expression were not only menacing but singularly majestic. To Hawthorne he seemed the embodiment of righteous wrath and conscious power.

"You Spaniards," he burst out, "are utterly unendur-

able! Your one idea of government is that all classes of the community shall be exploited for your benefit, shall minister to your well-being, shall subserve your whims and desires, shall bow to your bidding; and that you yourselves shall form a class apart, apart from and above all others. Can nothing make you realize that Paraguay has been these five years a republic, in which all are equal under the government? That for two years now I have been the government? That there are but two classes in Paraguay: I, who am supreme, and all other human beings, who are precisely on a level with each other, and shall be dealt with exactly alike? To no man, to no woman, shall I do injustice, or permit injustice. I do treat, I shall treat, the complaint of the poorest Indian or negro against even Don Bernardo Velasco himself, just as I should treat his complaint against the lowliest creature in Paraguay. I shall disfavour no one, and favour no one.

"And I shall permit no intercessions, no appeals, no criticisms of my decisions. This is the last impertinence of the kind that shall go unpunished. You shall realize, all shall realize, I am absolute. If you speak another word to me questioning my decision, I shall have you, along with this *bribonazo*, you should be ashamed to acknowledge as your brother, shot as he shall be."

"Shot!" Don Venancio exclaimed. "When?"

"At once!" the Dictator snarled, his face livid with rage.

"May we not get him a priest?" Don Venancio stammered. "May not my mother and father at least bid him adieu?"

"Whether he is to go to God," Francia sneered, "I cannot say. His relations, if they desire to address so vile a scoundrel, may speak to him if they are in time. You know the place!"

"But may he not at least have a priest?" Don Venancio begged. "May we not have time to get him a priest?"

"You may get him a priest," the Dictator announced, "if you are quick enough. I shall not have the execution delayed on any pretext. Go!"

"May I not speak a few words aside to my brother?" Don Venancio pleaded.

"If you speak any word more in my presence," the Dic-

tator thundered, "you shall be shot with him. Go while you may. Go with God!"

The young men bowed woodenly, yet ceremoniously. The prisoner had not looked at them more than one first glance as they came in. He did not look after them as they hurried away.

The Dictator turned his head and called sharply:

"Zorilla!"

A lieutenant, booted and belted, but otherwise habited like the sentinel and the two soldiers, appeared from under the colonnade. He saluted and stood at attention, saluted unhandily and stood at attention slouchily; still he saluted and stood at attention.

"Take this paper," Francia said, holding out to him the leaf torn from his note-book, "carry out the order written on it, and return it to me when carried out."

The lieutenant took the paper.

Francia felt in the pocket of his coat and produced three cartridges, the cartridges of the year 1816, loose, lumpy cylinders of greased paper, tied at each end, bulgy with a globular bullet and a loose charge of powder.

He extended these to the lieutenant, who took them.

"You may wait until high noon at the tree for the priest and the parents," Francia commanded. "No longer. Leave no guard over him afterwards. They may take away the corpse at once. Go!"

The two soldiers wheeled their prisoner, the lieutenant fell in behind them instead of walking in front of them, and all four tramped off and disappeared.

Without a glance after the pitiful procession, Francia turned to Hawthorne.

"Señor," he said, "I ask pardon for detaining you for such trifles. Such interruptions are inevitable. Cover your head or remain uncovered, as you please. I have never before seen a citizen of your illustrious country; with you, as I shall with any others, I waive all ceremony."

Hawthorne, unaffectedly horrified, though he had seen numberless arbitrary executions up and down the continent as in Cuyo and Granada, kept his self-possession and controlled his countenance to a well-assumed expression of deference. He held out the letter, which the Dictator took. He seated himself in his arm-chair, waving a not ungracious

hand toward the other, which Hawthorne reoccupied, keeping, however, his hat in his hand.

The Dictator read the superscription of the letter and, finding there all his titles, broke the seal. He ran his eye over the contents, and said:

"Señor Don Guillermo, this letter recommends you in the most flattering terms. But I care nothing for the recommendation of the British Consul at Buenos Aires, whom I do not know and whom I have never seen. Yourself I have seen, and I know you. I know men. I read men. Seldom do I read them wrong. I do not read you wrong. I know you. Tell me why you have come to Paraguay."

Hawthorne's clear, level gaze met Francia's. Before he could utter a word, the Dictator spoke again:

"Ah, you have a spine in your back! You Americans! You hold up your heads! You look a man in the face. My Paraguayans scan the pavement or their eyes shift and wander. I often tell Sabola and Narvaez to try dissecting their corpses to see if they are not constructed differently from other men. I conjecture that they lack a bone in their necks. Or perhaps they have one too many and cannot hold up their heads on that account. However that may be, tell me what has brought you to Asuncion."

"In a word," said Hawthorne, "I have come expecting to enrich myself by showing you how to enrich yourself tenfold and your country a thousandfold."

"Men such as yourself, Don Guillermo," said the Dictator, "are always and shall always be welcomed by me. I even permit such men to address me familiarly, as you do."

"Excelentísimo Señor," said Hawthorne, quickly catching and dexterously availing himself of the implied rebuke, "to explain my ideas and purposes, I must ask your indulgence for a somewhat lengthy discourse."

"It is freely granted," said the Dictator; "you interest me."

Taking a cigar-case from the breast pocket of his coat, he offered it to Hawthorne, who took one of the huge native cigars. He puffed once or twice and then, while the Dictator smoked steadily, he began:

"Excelentísimo Señor, Paraguay possesses a source of unbounded opulence which is not at present regarded. Chocolate has been known to the world but some three hun-

dred years. It has already won the approval of a considerable portion of mankind, is much drunk and enriches many districts which produce it. Coffee has been known for more than a thousand years, is drunk by a great part of the human race, and makes wealthy communities far larger and more numerous than those which produce chocolate. And what need I say of tea, which is consumed all over the world and which is the chief source of affluence to China, that most prosperous and populous of nations? Now, Paraguay produces *maté*, which gives mankind a beverage far more delightful to taste, far more beneficial in its effects than chocolate, coffee or tea. Yet it is allowed to go to waste. The production of *yerba* is not carried on energetically, nor is its export pushed with any sort of vigour. It is drunk universally throughout the republic, but even in the neighbouring parts of South America the trade in it is slack and slow, while outside of this continent it is unknown. All this can easily be changed. *Maté* is a beverage as superior to chocolate, coffee or tea, as they are to beer, wine, rum or any kind of spirits. *Yerba* need only be known to take at once its proper place in popular favour above all other beverages which the world produces. Wherever it is known, the demand for it will be immediate and universal. Then consider, Excelentísimo Señor, the tribute which would flow into Paraguay from all parts of the world. For whereas coffee is grown in many and divers places and may be grown in many more throughout the tropics, its spread depending only on the enterprise of the communities which strive to raise it, whereas chocolate is in much the same case, whereas even tea may be raised outside of China, there is not, I am told, one single plant of *yerba maté* beyond the borders of Paraguay. You have it all. You can prevent the export or smuggling of seeds or cuttings, you can keep the culture of the tree and the preparation of the powder forever within the limits of your nation, you can remain in perpetuity in possession of the entire supply of an article which men of every country will clamour for as soon as they know of it, for which they will pay liberally, and which they will never cease to purchase after they have once begun to use it. Do I make myself intelligible, Excelentísimo Señor?"

"Most intelligible, Señor Don Guillermo," the Dictator



replied. "You interest me still more; what you *say* is full of sense. But what I desire to know is what you propose to do."

"Excelentísimo Señor," said Hawthorne, "I do not venture to propose anything. I leave the making of the proposition to you. But with your permission, Excelentísimo Señor, I shall unfold to you what I think is necessary to the success I hope for and which is within your grasp. In the first place, I may not be the only man with this idea. At this moment there may be in Buenos Aires, in Montevideo, in Brazil or in Peru some man who has formed this same conception. There may be more than one. There may be scores. Such ideas are in the air, as it were, and for a long time suspected by no one, are often when first grasped, grasped by several thinkers at the same instant. So it may be with this idea of mine. The first thing, then, to be done is for you to prohibit the export of any part or product of the *maté* tree except the leaf-powder as usually bagged and vended by the *yerbateros*. Of equal importance is it that you should send bodies of troops to patrol your borders everywhere; to the north, east and south especially, where they are easiest of access from Brazil. You can thus forestall any effort to gather and prepare *maté* on debatable ground or to carry cuttings or seeds across those portions of your boundaries.

"The second matter of importance, Excelentísimo Señor, is that the method of production of *maté* be improved. The export of cotton is a source of great wealth to my country. Formerly the production scarcely sufficed for home needs. But since the invention of a machine for preparing the fibre, the quantity produced by the same amount of labour is greatly increased and the quality is far better. So with *maté*. I am told that it now grows only wild, and is gathered from forests and thickets. By the methods of the Jesuits of fifty years ago and earlier, groves or orchards or plantations of the tree may be created. The details of gathering the leaves and preparing the powder should be investigated. The packing of the powder should be better. The raw-hide bags spoil the flavour for Europeans. Bags of canvas should be used instead.

"The third requisite for success, Excelentísimo Señor, is that *maté* be brought to notice in every country. I have

read that within fifty years hundreds of coffee-rooms appeared in England, that within ten years after tobacco was first introduced into London more than a thousand shops for the sale of it were driving a lucrative trade in that city. I vow that I believe that within ten years after *maté* is first introduced into England more than a hundred *maté*-rooms will be well patronised. And the like is to be expected of Paris and Madrid, of Vienna and Moscow, of coffee-loving Constantinople, and Calcutta. Even in China, the home of tea, *maté* will be eagerly bought and used once it is introduced. Only one trial is needed to make any one prefer it to any other drink. What is required is that men who believe in it, who realise its worth, men who can talk well, should visit the capitals of the world and demonstrate its unquestionable superiority. Wherever such a man has been with a stock of the best *maté*, he will leave behind him at least one establishment for its sale, at least one popular resort supported by the profits of preparing the drink and vending it to throngs of delighted patrons. More and more will spring up from the first. The spread of its vogue will follow irresistibly, will grow like the sweep of an inundation, will expand over the whole earth.

"This, then, is my suggestion: Limit the production of *yerba* to Paraguay absolutely, improve its quality to the uttermost, herald its virtues and charms throughout the world. Do I make myself understood, Excelentísimo Señor?"

"Entirely, Señor Don Guillermo," the Dictator replied. "You speak well. You speak Spanish very well. Do you speak any other languages?"

"I speak French," Hawthorne replied.

"If you are as fluent in French as in Spanish," said Francia, "you should have a better command of it than I. You are even eloquent in Spanish. You dazzle me. I see it all happen. I touch the heaps of silver and gold."

"You shall," Hawthorne affirmed. "I await your consideration of what I have said, and your decision upon it."

As he spoke these words, Hawthorne perceived that Francia was no longer eyeing him, but staring the length of the courtyard.

## CHAPTER X

## THE PYTHONESS

FOLLOWING the Dictator's gaze, Hawthorne looked down the *patio*. He saw approaching an elderly woman and a young man. The young man carried his cocked hat in his hand and showed a bare head of short brown curls, setting off a handsome, genial, smiling face. He was tall and trod jauntily, his slender court-sword easily out of the way of his feet, his graceful form clad in a perfectly fitting suit of pale blue silk with silver facings, his calves well turned under the inevitable white stockings.

Hawthorne recognised his shipmate, young Don Beltran Jaray, and felt, even after four months of daily and day-long companionship, the thrill which Beltran's presence never failed to give him. It was as if the day had been cloudy and the sun had but now come out full strength, as if the courtyard had been dimly lit, and suddenly blazed with the brilliance of noon sunlight, with the glow of tropic warmth and colour.

He glanced at the Dictator, to see whether he also felt Beltran's charm, and seemed to surmise on that cold, inscrutable countenance a flicker of astonishment and interest; thought he discerned through its iron impassivity an uncontrollable softening of that icy heart toward the magic of Beltran's radiant personality.

Hawthorne himself was more interested in the old lady behind whom Beltran paced. Manifestly this was his redoubtable grandmother, Doña Juana Isquibel.

Hawthorne regarded her with attention.

She wore a flat-crowned, broad-brimmed straw hat, under which her face showed wizened, wrinkled and altogether like an old dried apple. Out of its seams and lines her eyes sparkled like the black diamonds in the Dictator's ring.

Her throat was pouched and hung in folds, but her neck and bosom were firm and smooth as a girl's. She wore the universal native *tupoi* of white cotton loosely girdled with an embroidered red and green belt. It amazed Hawthorne

after all he had heard of her great age to see the youthful contour of her bust, the slenderness of her uncorseted waist, the easy uprightness of her carriage, the springy vitality of her walk. Her gown was short, according to the style approved at Asuncion, and showed trig, white-stockinged ankles, and small slippered feet. She walked straight up to the Dictator, and while her grandson behind her bowed low, she held out a small hand, brown indeed and lank, but shapely and tiny beyond belief and with delicately tapered fingers. The Dictator took it, bent over it, and kissed it without a word. Between him and Hawthorne she marched and plumped herself into the chair from which Hawthorne had risen.

"Since you have not had the grace, Gaspar," she announced, "to ask me to have a chair, I'll take one for myself. I'd take yours, but perhaps your idea of your new dignities might lead you to think it incumbent upon you to send me to the *banquillo* for disrespect."

She was entirely at her ease under the Dictator's brow-beating gaze.

"How did you get in?" he demanded.

"Oh, you can work miracles, Gaspar," she harangued him. "You are supreme, and your word is law for men and beasts, for plants and trees, for winds and stars. You can transform a batch of no-account mulattoes into a formidable squadron of lancers after a mere six weeks' drill; you can rig up your guards in big fur shakoes under this merciless sun and squeeze them into long-tailed, tight-waisted coats, and make them keep them buttoned over the red waistcoats you made for them out of pulpit-curtains, and somehow you have the luck that they do not die of heat in their finery; you can call them grenadiers or husars as you please, whether they are afoot or on horseback, and nobody laughs, for they are really efficient troops, too, in spite of their absurd attire; you can shoot young noblemen without trial for sowing half of the wild oats you sowed at the same age; you can do all sorts of wonders, but you cannot create a sentry who will halt me—and you know it!

"I was La Suprema long before you were El Supremo, long before you were born, Godson, ten years earlier, at least, and maybe twenty-five, if the whole truth were known.

I'm not La Suprema any more, but I was once, was for many years, was unmatched and incomparable and hailed such by universal acclamation, not by a mere majority vote made unanimous under duress. It was acclamation, too, that hailed me La Perpetua. You'll be voted El Perpetuo next convention, I suppose, if you want it, but I am La Perpetua already, have been for five and twenty years and shall be as long as I live. I'm due all the respect, all the reverence that belongs to all sorts of Everlastings and Immortelles. And your sentries accord it to me. And you can't get the instinct out of them, not if you fusillade one out of every ten to disabuse the rest of their deference towards me. So there! I have been La Suprema in my time just as much as you are El Supremo in yours. And I am La Perpetua as long as I live, shall be La Perpetua as long as I breathe."

When she paused, the Dictator, at once sourly and indulgently, remarked:

"You have plenty of breath to spare, Godmother."

"Sixteen years of it," she smiled. "If I have my way, I mean to live to be a hundred."

"And meanwhile," Francia smiled back at her, "you exact subservience of all men."

"As I did when I was fourteen," she boasted, "and got it!"

"And get it yet," Francia added gallantly.

"Now you speak sensibly, Gaspar," she chirped. "Keep on being sensible. To begin with, promise me you will not have the sentry shot!"

"The promise is given," Francia bowed.

"Not punished at all," she insisted.

"I shall confine himself," the Dictator enunciated haughtily, "to convincing him that you are the only living being who may enter here unannounced."

"You may spare yourself the trouble, Gaspar," she chuckled; "he knows that already. He nearly bayoneted Beltran before I could convince him that he was under my protection and passed with me. You may depend upon your present sentry and any of his fellows to relax your orders to no one on earth save me only."

During this passage at arms Hawthorne was mute, of course, and rigid. Not a muscle of him moved except his

eyes; they were more than busy, for he was eager to miss nothing of the play of vanity, self-complacency and arrogance upon the old lady's wonderful visage, and no less eager to watch the subtle indications, perceptible to him who thought he had the clue, of Francia's immediate and positive interest in Beltran, of his warming towards him, of his melting under the witchery of Beltran's individuality. The Dictator was all attention to the imperious dowager, yet kept shooting swift glances at Beltran, conning him all over.

At the first opportunity which Señora Isquibel gave him, he remarked:

"You remind me that you have not told me why you have come."

"In the first place," Doña Juana declared, "to present to you my grandson, Don Beltran Jaray, newly returned home from Spain, who wishes to pay his respects to you."

With a charming affability, the Dictator acknowledged the young man's bow.

"Your manners are still good, Gaspar," Doña Juana commented. "Power has not spoiled them. But they would show better if you presented your guest to me, called Bopî to set chairs for the two young men, who are doubtless tired with standing, and sat down yourself."

"This gentleman," Francia said, "is Don Guillermo Atorno, of the *Estados Unidos del America del Norte*. Señor Don Guillermo, let me present you to Doña Juana Isquibel of Itapuá, my revered Godmother."

"Old fool that I am," Doña Juana cried, springing to her feet, "not to recognize Beltran's friend."

She seized his hands and continued:

"You must kiss me like a good grandson. I consider you my other grandson. Beltran talked of you half the night."

Hawthorne was more than a little embarrassed, but the vivacious old creature drew him to her and kissed him before he knew what had happened.

"Bopî!" Francia called sharply, adding some words in Guarani. In a moment the mulatto boy appeared, half dragging, half carrying two rush-bottom chairs, with the universal tall, straight backs.

When the chairs were placed, Doña Juana bounced back

to hers, Francia occupied his official seat, and the young men, at his bidding and urging, sat down also.

At once Señora Isquibel spoke again:

"In the second place, Gaspar, I have come to tell you that I am going to have a *fiesta* the day after to-morrow, on my birthday, in honour of the feast of St. John the Baptist, to thank him for bringing my grandson and goddaughter safe home to us from across the ocean. I am going to invite everybody worth having, and I want you to come too."

"I have never attended festivities," Francia demurred, "since my elevation to authority."

"But you are going to attend this festivity," Doña Juana declared, waving one hand.

"It may be," the Dictator smiled, "that I shall come."

"I'm not going to have any 'may be's,'" the masterful old lady proclaimed. "And as they won't care a button for how I persuade you, will you please give these young bucks leave to chat while I bring you round."

The Dictator inclined his head toward the young men, with a wave of his hand, Doña Juana leaned toward him and lowered her voice.

"How did you sleep, Guillermo?" Beltran asked.

"As you did, I trust," Hawthorne answered, "as a man ought to after four months of baking deck-house and mosquitoes by the million, when he sleeps under a net-canopy on a deep, soft bed."

"Found any marvels in Asuncion yet?" Beltran queried.

"At Dr. Bargas' wine-shop," Hawthorne began.

"Yes," Beltran broke in on him, "Grandmother tells me the old boy hasn't aged much or changed much in twelve years, and talks as much as ever."

"It is not that," Hawthorne explained. "I was astonished to see wine sold at a copper a quart, drunk out of silver and the goblets and tankards lying pell-mell on the casks."

"Oh," Beltran exclaimed, enlightened, "that's natural here! Nobody ever steals anything in Asuncion; and silver is cheapest in the end; never wears out, and can be melted up any time."

"I was still more astonished," Hawthorne continued, "to see the magnificent doctor go down on his green satin knee

to draw a stoup of wine for a half-naked, barefoot, ponchoed peon."

"That would surprise a native," Beltran ruminated. "Only gentlemen frequent Bargas' premises. Probably some poor devil on his first visit to the capital blundered in there and of course Bargas wouldn't have hurt his feelings; no Castilian would."

The mulatto slouched across the court and grunted some sentences in Guarani, some words of which Hawthorne understood.

"Who?" the Dictator queried sharply, in the same tongue.

"Don Basilio Goyez," Bopî enunciated intelligibly enough.

"Tell him to wait!" Francia snapped out, still in Guarani.

Instantly he dismissed the matter; and as Bopî shambled off, at once again was all quizzical attention to Doña Juana.

"It is understood, then," she resumed, "that you are to come."

"I have not said so," Francia demurred.

"No," the old lady blandly admitted, "but I have. And the arguments I have just rehearsed were enough to convince any sane human being. You are coming. That is settled. But I want you not only to come, but to be agreeable. I'm not going to leave José Carísimo at home, and I don't mean you to spoil my party by snubbing him."

"I shall not argue the point," Francia declared acidly.

"No," the old lady snapped, "you won't! You'll come, and you'll behave properly to him. He's punished enough for a slip of the tongue he never intended. He's perfectly willing to call you 'Most Excellent Sir,' ten times in every sentence, if he can only remember to do it. And he'll remember it after all the fuss you have made. Come and be decent to him."

"I am sure," said Francia slyly, "that I shall never have any difficulty being polite to Don José, supposing we ever meet again. I am unaware of any default in manners towards him in the past. You forget that it was altogether he who failed in deference towards me. If you can assure me of his behaving with propriety, I can account for myself."



"Very decent of you, Gaspar," Doña Juana admitted. "I can account for him."

"And now," said the Dictator, "as I have constructively waived any objection to Don José, and as the proverb says, one nasty pill is enough for one day, suppose you tell me precisely whom I may expect to encounter, supposing I come. I am disposed to humour you, Godmother, but I ought to be assured that I will not be put in too difficult a position. Let me see the list of your prospective guests, before I accept."

Doña Juana bridled like a melodramatic actress:

"I shall do no such thing," she declared. "You are no King, or Viceroy, to demand a list of my guests and strike out the names you do not like. I have told you I mean to have everybody worth having. You know what that means as well as if you read the list. Are you capable of so much as insinuating to me, of so much as admitting to your secret self, that you are going to demur to being a fellow guest with dear old Bernardo Velasco, or *compadre* Gregorio, if they are willing to greet you? I'm going to have Gregorio, of course, and all his former colleagues, and all Bernardo's, for that matter, and all the heroes against the invasion and other ex-generals; all the desirable Creoles and every single old Spaniard. I hate their foolish politics, but they are charming socially as are all their families."

"As you have specified," Francia interrupted, "nearly all the people I might be supposed not to wish to meet, it seems to me"—Hawthorne saw his eyes twinkle—"that my notion of going over your list was not such a bad one."

"Surely," the old dowager argued, "you can let bygones be bygones, if they can. They are abased and you are exalted. If they can pocket their defeat, surely you can afford to forgive their past opposition. You ought not to object to meeting them."

"I did not say I objected," Francia retorted, with the air of a lawyer leading up to a point, "and if you could guarantee me that their antagonism is wholly of the past I should waive them all as readily as Don José."

"I can warrant you that for the hours of my *fiesta*," the old lady asserted. "So your hesitation on that score

should vanish, and your idea of scrutinizing my list evaporate with it."

"Not at all," Francia came back at her. "If there be so much potential embarrassment in that much of your list, how do I know what there is in the rest of it?"

"Leave all that to me, Gaspar," she advised.

Francia was smiling maliciously, Hawthorne judged.

"Am I to be prepared," he enquired, "to meet my charming cousins?"

"All the Caballeros will be there, of course," Doña Juana informed him.

"None of them objectionable to me, not even Jerman," Francia assured her. "I was not thinking of my cousins on my grandfather's side, but of my grandmother's clan."

The old lady's face assumed an expression of contemptuous disgust.

"Your badinage," she sneered, "is clumsy, Gaspar. I said everybody worth meeting, not everybody not worth meeting. Never a Rodriguez has set foot on my property, nor ever will; nor any Martinez or Benitez or Fernandez or Gomez or Lopez or Mendez or Perez."

Francia bowed ironically.

"If all your inclusions," he bantered, "show as much good judgment as your exclusions, I fancy I am safe in coming."

Señora Isquibel instantly took the other tack.

"If you come," she said, "you must stay—not spoil my festivity by leaving in a huff."

"No danger," the Dictator said.

"I have invited Estanislao," she ventured.

"Ingratitude," Francia said, "injures only the ingrate. He should have nothing against me, and surely I nothing against him."

"And Cayetano," she added.

"And, of course, Petrona," Francia deduced placidly.

"Of course," Doña Juana confirmed.

"Since her marriage," Francia ruminated, "I have never spoken to Petrona, and seldom seen her even at a distance."

"But you will come?" she pressed him.

"As far as she is concerned," he replied, "I have no rancour against poor Petrona."

"Valeriano and Segundo will be there also," she warned him.

Francia waved a hand.

"I make no demur," he said.

"And I want you to promise," Doña Isquibel pursued, "not only to come but to be gracious."

"Can you imagine me gracious?" he bantered her.

"Nobody more so," she declared, "when you choose."

"Well," Francia said, still bantering, "I pledge myself to be as gracious as I know how, provided that I come."

"Still conditions?" she queried.

"Juana," he said, "you ask me to meet nearly all the people who will most try my self-control and tax my patience. I agree to all you ask, provided you invite with me my official family."

"Not Gumesindo?" she cried.

"Why should you boggle at Gumesindo," he quizzed her, "when you ask me to accede as to Estanislao?"

"Faugh!" she cried. "I loathe Gumesindo and all his tribe. They are not desirable Creoles. But I give in. You have caught me. He and Policarpo and all—I'll yield. I'll invite them all."

"Then I shall come," Francia finally agreed.

"And be affable," the dowager insisted, "to José and all?"

"Godmother," Francia said, with a charming look and intonation, "I do not do anything by halves. I shall do everything in my power to make your festival a success."

"That is the way to talk!" she exclaimed. "I knew I'd bring you round. There is no use arguing with me!"

"Not the least in the world," Francia admitted quizzically.

"And now," she said, rising, "I must consult you on a point of etiquette. Do I make my obeisance here to the Dictator, and retreat in good order, or does my godson escort me to my horse?"

Francia still smiled slyly.

"We all escort you to your milk-white palfrey," he said.

As they passed the length of the *patio*, Hawthorne noticed a handsome, conceited-looking Creole, cocked hat in hand, pacing up and down under the arcade on the shady side. He wore the black stockings, knee-breeches, and waistcoat

of a doctor of laws, but his coat was that of a lieutenant of infantry—blue, with red facings. His very curly hair was neither wigged nor powdered, and was cut fairly short.

Outside they found a negro groom holding a roan mule, with a very old and worn saddle showing remains of a former covering of red plush; a tall cream-coloured mare, with a magnificent, old-fashioned Peninsular saddle, all green velvet and silver mountings; and a restive blood-bay, girthed with a new pigskin saddle of the latest French pattern.

By the horses the old lady paused.

"With your permission," she said, "I'll speak a word to Don Guillermo, I mean to Guillermo, for I'm not going to Don him any more than Beltran."

Francia bowed.

"Guillermo, my son," she said to Hawthorne, "I want you not only to come to my *fiesta*, but to feel at home in my house. For that you must make its acquaintance by daylight. So come out as soon as you can after sunrise, before the day warms up, go over the place, become familiar with it, dine with us and take your siesta at my house. Then you will be really at home for the *fiesta*."

Hawthorne promised, feeling really filial to the old lady already.

Beltran gave his grandmother a lift up and she rose to her saddle springily as a girl, her little slipper barely touching his interlocked fingers.

The instant he was astride and his groom loosed his hold on the bit, Beltran's mount began not only to prance and curvet, but to rear and buck. Thereupon Beltran gave them a magnificent exhibition of horsemanship. The stallion's behaviour was really terrific, the rider never lost his patience or temper, did nothing theatrical or ostentatious, but without any show of effort, without an ungraceful movement or position, first allowed his mount to work off some of his venom and energy and then wore him down to obedience and curbed him to decorum.

As the three cantered off the Dictator, who had watched the contest as calmly and as interestedly as Doña Juana, remarked:

"I have not, Señor Don Guillermo, a better horse-master among my cavalry."

"Nor," Hawthorne ventured to add, "a better diplomat among your subjects."

"Diplomat," Francia exclaimed. "She's more like a bludgeon. She does not inveigle, she gives orders."

"Most excellent sir," Hawthorne dared, "you demonstrate that you not only can give orders, but can take them."

"Humph!" said Francia. "I know the pythonesse that issues them. I'd as soon try a wrestling match in the wild woods with an anaconda or a boa-constrictor as oppose my godmother. *Madrina* Juana is the only woman in Paraguay unafraid of me, and of all Paraguayans none is more staunchly loyal, for all her Castilian blood and birth, to republican principles or to my administration."

"Her demeanour towards you, most excellent sir," Hawthorne went on, "reminds me of what I have heard of the attitude of Napoleon's mother to her imperial son."

Francia was plainly flattered by the comparison and pleased at the compliment.

When they re-entered the courtyard Hawthorne noticed Basilio Goyez, utterly forgotten, patiently pacing up and down under the arcade. Francia noticed him also, for Hawthorne caught the barely perceptible alteration in his expression which betrayed his recognition. No change of demeanour, however, indicated that the Dictator was aware of Basilio Goyez's existence.

His up-and-down sentry-go, it so happened, at the moment was bringing him towards the entrance so that Francia and Hawthorne came opposite him about the middle of the long side of the court.

Basilio Goyez, respectfully bowing, enquired whether El Supremo had any commands for him and whether he might be permitted to hand in his accounts that evening.

Francia, stiffening visibly, drawing himself up to his full height, fairly vibrated with rage. He fixed on the miserable, and now manifestly trembling Basilio, a cold stare of disapproval; and, without uttering a sound, glared at him until the wretch began to stammer some broken attempts at excuses.

"Did I not send you word to wait?" Francia snarled at him.

"Assuredly, without doubt, Excelentísimo Señor," Goyez babbled.

"Why, then," Francia demanded, "did you not wait until I sent for you?"

"I presumed," Basilio began, "that your Excellency might have orders to give."

"The curse of Paraguay," Francia burst out, "is to be populated by dolts. It seems that there is no native in all Paraguay save myself that is not a fool. Can you not comprehend plain Castilian or plain Guarani? Do you not understand the word 'wait'? You pay me a fool's compliment when you permit yourself to fancy that when I say 'wait' I mean interrupt. Will none of you ever learn that when I give a command I mean it as given? I use language as I intend it to be understood and I speak without ambiguity. 'You presumed.' You have no right to presume. I was made Dictator precisely that presuming and supposing and imagining should cease and obedience take their place. I am supreme Dictator and the rest of you are not to behave according to your own whims and fancies, but to accord me exact and scrupulous obedience. I am weary of trying to teach you. Perhaps you can learn from meditation since instruction fails on you. You 'presumed I might have orders to give.' I have one order to give. May it teach you that when I appointed you Minister of Finance and Director of Customs it was in order that you might execute my behests, not presume to forestall my decisions and dictate to me what I should decide. I have, in fact, one order to give. You shall hear it."

Turning, he called:

"Iturbe!"

A lieutenant appeared and saluted.

"Take this rascal to the guardhouse," Francia commanded. "Keep him there till to-morrow morning. Give him water if he asks for it, but no food. Let him go at sunrise. He may meditate till dawn and reflect on the difference between presumption and subordination."

Passing on up the *patio* as if nothing had occurred, he halted by his chair.

"Sit down!" he exploded, absent-mindedly.

Hawthorne seated himself, eyeing the Dictator as he

stood by his table, testily tossing the papers about and rummaging among them.

He slowly sat down and sighed.

"Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "you differ from all the foreigners who have arrived at Asuncion in my time. The others aimed, often greedily, always crudely, at enriching themselves. They mostly made no concealment of their intention to grow rich by impoverishing my countrymen; mostly they cynically advertised their knavery.

"You alone propose to enrich Paraguay. And your proposition is most plausible. I am fascinated. I see great possibilities. I could spend the rest of the day in conversation with you.

"But I find here pressing matters of routine that demand my immediate attention. I must ask you to terminate this interview and resume our conference later."

Hawthorne stood up and bowed.

"When shall I return?" he asked.

Francia, also on his feet, queried:

"Do Americans eat as much as Englishmen?"

"That I could not say," Hawthorne replied. "But I can certify that they do not eat as much as Paraguayans, if I may judge by the meals I shared yesterday. No American would so much as think of such a supper, after such a dinner."

"Would bread, roast-pigeon, wine and fruit appear sufficient supper to an American?" the Dictator asked.

"About enough, in general," Hawthorne answered, "and after an Asuncion dinner, fully enough, I should say."

"Then," said Francia, "if you are willing to do penance, will you sup with me here at eight to-night?"

"I should be delighted!" Hawthorne affirmed unaffectedly.

"Suppose," the Dictator concluded, "that you come at half after seven, if you can. You interest me greatly. Señor Don Guillermo."

## CHAPTER XI

## CONSPIRACY

AS Hawthorne, after a superabundant dinner and a long siesta, approached Dr. Bargas' wine-shop rather early in the declining afternoon, he saw under the portico a chair set by the door and in it recognised the little surgeon.

Parlett saluted him genially:

"They're all here," he said. "Shop full; yard full, too. You can conspire all you please unless you hear me tune up. Little Bo Peep is off after those sheep."

"Will you tell me," Hawthorne asked, "why there are so many Bopîs in Asuncion?"

"That's easy," the surgeon replied. "It's because there are so many one-eyed peons. Bopî means one-eyed in Guarani."

"But why are there so many one-eyed peons?" Hawthorne persisted.

"Any Hebrew blood in you?" Parlett queried.

"No," Hawthorne denied, startled. "Why?"

"You ask questions just like a Jew," the surgeon explained.

"Just like an American," Hawthorne corrected him.

"Consider the parenthesis expunged from the congressional record," Parlett soothed him. "Returning to your query. Infant ophthalmia is very general among the natives here, and universal among the negroes and mulattoes. Sore-eyed babies everywhere; all babies with sore eyes. The native quacks have one or two genuinely valuable secrets, mixed up with their barbarous bleeding, purging and charm-chanting. One is an absolutely effective preventive of suppuration. If I could learn its composition I'd make myself famous. I can't even guess whether it is a mineral solution or a vegetable infusion. Anyhow, it cures boils, pussy wounds, scald, tetter, and sore eyes."

"Now mark the folly of superstition. The dolts tell the mother to bathe the right eye with the wash. That always cures the right eye. Sometimes the left eye gets well of itself. Often the cured right eye goes blind from sym-



pathy with the inflamed left eye. But there is a large residuum of cases where the result is a one-eyed victim of superstition. Hence the crop of Bopîs."

Inside the wine-house Hawthorne saw rise to greet him a considerable gathering.

He was formally presented to every man in succession, but caught only some of the names.

When he had taken the chair offered him and the others had seated themselves, every chair and every cask, box, *petacon*, bale, *seron* and *tercio* available as a seat was occupied. Dr. Bargas, as before, half leaned, half sat, this time on the desk-top of his open *bufete* between the doors.

He explained:

"We have here, Señor Don Guillermo, an assemblage in which even my friend the renowned Marquess de Torretagle de Lima might deign to participate. The bluest blood, the greatest wealth, the loftiest intellects of Asuncion are here congregated to meet you. The necessities of our circumstances, on which I need not dilate, make it imperative that there should be no undue appearance of crowding, in case some unfriendly intruder should thrust himself among us. Therefore a full half of the company will listen from my inner room or from the *patio*, any one of whom will enter, should he think fit to express his opinions. In which case I will present him to you."

During this speech Hawthorne surveyed the assembly.

Most of them held tankards or goblets of wine.

Perched upon *tercios* of *maté*, Generals Zevallos, Cabañas, Caballero and Gamarra, clustered about the titanic Fulgencio Yegros, were all blue-coated and otherwise clad like him. Grouped in chairs about the *bufete* sat old Velasco, and several doctors of law in black, Padre Bogarin, brown-habited, and Don Gregorio in drab. The rest of the company were costumed like the Mayorga household in many-buttoned, much-flapped coats of vermilion, scarlet, crimson, claret-colour, purple, lavender, plum-colour, grass-green or apple-green, in embroidered waistcoats and satin knee-breeches of equally garish hues, always sharply contrasted with each other and with the wearer's coat.

Among them loomed young Don Saturnino Bedoya, a singularly commanding presence, as gigantic as Yegros in a very different way. For while full seven feet tall, he was

slender though plump, and notably graceful, in a startling costume of gold-brown breeches, orange waistcoat and lemon-yellow coat.

"You have here, Señor Don Guillermo," Dr. Bargas concluded, "a body of men hating tyranny, resolute to throw it off by any possible means, hitherto totally at a loss for any workable plan of action, and now gathered in the hope of valuable suggestions from you. I ask for silence while you repeat to these gentlemen the purposes I have already outlined to them and communicate to us the plans you have not yet had an opportunity to reveal."

"Before that silence is accorded and those plans revealed," a clear, self-confident voice interjected, "I wish to be heard and to depart."

There stood up from a chair by the casks along the west wall a medium-sized man in a plum-coloured coat. His name Hawthorne remembered.

Don Prudencio La Guardia continued:

"We have been invited here to-day under pledge of secrecy, allured by vague hints of great possibilities of benefit to ourselves and our country. Once here we have been told we are to meet a saviour, a foreigner who has come of his own accord to show us how to free ourselves from the tyrant, whom I have not hesitated so to name to his face, nor openly to antagonise at every public opportunity. I have remained to view this foreigner. I have viewed him. Don Vicente, his host, has had the good sense to absent himself from our conventicle. I intend to be sensible also. I speak and I depart. I am not afraid of our supreme Dictator as long as I merely oppose him openly and legally, acquiesce promptly and completely when not sufficiently supported against him by my fellow citizens, and obey to the letter his decrees and proclamations, which are the law of the land. I hate him enough to join early and zealously to further any promising attempt to overthrow him. But I see no promise in conspiracies. I have not conspired against him, I do not, I shall not. I go. Before I go I wish to warn you all. Have you so soon forgotten the twenty-ninth of September, five years ago? What happened on that day? An abortive attempt to overthrow the republic and re-establish the authority of the King of Spain? In appearance, yes! In fact, what?

What but the springing of a devilish trap by which this demon destroyed his chief personal enemies? Did Padre Dalmacio Taboada preach of his own accord reaction and conspiracy? Not he. Did Don Francisco Guerreros, cousin of our good Sinforiano here? Did the other colonels, did General Juan Zavalla, did Don Mariano Mallada, conspire of their own volition? Not a particle. I call to witness Don Porfirio Somellera here. He knows. It was all a trap of that fiend. He suborned the Catalan Pablo Martin to insinuate that Don Jerman's troops and Don Fulgencio's were disloyal to them and ready to reproclaim the king. Martin suggested to Don Mariano the idea of seizing the barrack of Don Valeriano's regiment; egged on Padre Dalmacio to talk over the Colonels, and reported every detail of their plans to that spinach-eater. They thought they were rehoisting the royal standard forever over Paraguay; believed, poor fools, that the regiment was staunch to a man, that the other brigades would join them at a word. Actually they hoisted the red and yellow ensign over a *cuartel* where half the privates even were ready to turn on them on a signal, at an instant when the men in the other barracks were ranked in the *patios*, muskets loaded with ball, flints picked, bayonets fixed, cannon rammed with double charges, fuses lit and all ready. Was it an insurrection, a revolt, a mutiny? Was it even a riot or a fight? It was merely a ten minutes' massacre, a ridiculous tragedy, a hideous farce. Padre Taboada was spared because he knew nothing except that he had acted upon the suggestions of Lieutenant Martin. But Colonel Guerreros, General Zavalla, General Mallada, all perished in the slaughter. Lieutenant Martin was opportunely shot in the back. The great spider who had entangled them in his web was glutted with victims. Their confiscated property filled his coffers. As Martin was conveniently dead there was no one to claim a reward or tattle in his cups."

"You go too fast," Don Jerman Caballero broke in. "That was a real attempt at a counter-revolution, however advantageously it ended for Francia. My troops were ready, as you say, but ready to join it. Had I not, I regret, succeeded in recalling them to what I believed their duty, the revolution would have succeeded."

"You were a dupe too," Don Porfirio Somellera inter-

rupted. "Inveigling you into making that speech was part of the plot."

"Of course it was," La Guardia continued. "Run over in your mind the origins and results of the attempt of the twenty-ninth of September. Apply that to your situation. You see before you liberation, liberty, security; I see the prison, the dungeon, fetters, torture and the grave. You think yourselves conspiring in secret; taking a risk perhaps, but a risk that may lead you to prosperity. I tell you every word you utter will be accurately reported to the despot. This is a trap of his, as the pretended counter-revolution, whatever Don Jerman says, was a trap of his. His coffers are empty. Your property will fill them. He feels himself insecure in his curule chair. Your removal will strengthen his hold on the country. It is so obvious, yet you will not see it. He wishes to destroy you. He enlists the services of a smooth-tongued outlander. You have assembled to acclaim a liberator, a bringer of all the skill and vigour of the northern races. I see a spy, a hired tool of the despot's. I warn you, and I go. And I ask every man who has sense to go with me."

He bowed ceremoniously and gazed about the room.

Not a man moved.

"You were christened Prudencio," spoke up Don Larios Galvan, a bony little notary seated next Don Gregorio.

"La Guardia guards himself, according to his name," said Don Jacinto Ruiz, a fat notary who sat by Don Bernardo. Don Gregorio rose and said.

"Gentlemen, I have the profoundest confidence in Don Guillermo here. I request that any man who agrees with our good Prudencio join him at once."

No one stirred.

"*Vaya Usted con Dios, hermano!*" said Dr. Bargas.

Don Prudencio bowed again and went out.

Nearly every man in the gathering raised his goblet or tankard to his lips.

"Let us drink," called that giant canary, Don Saturnino Bedoya, "to our better acquaintance with Don Guillermo Atorno."

All drank, a mere swallow apiece, Hawthorne noticed, as he acknowledged the toast; Dr. Bargas hastening to fill a goblet for him.

"We listen," said Don Fernando de la Mora, shifting an obviously gouty foot.

Hawthorne saw every face turned to his, saw the doors full of eager listeners.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am much moved by your confidence in a stranger who might be all Don Prudencio insinuates."

"You may pass over the compliments," said Don Plutarco Bedoya, the elder brother of the handsome giant, a black-clad doctor of laws. "We have all either read or heard of the letters you brought Vicente and Jenofonte. Perrichon is neither tool nor dupe of Francia's. Candioti makes no mistakes. We all trust them and you. We have all heard of what you said here yesterday. We want to hear your proposals."

"Briefly," said Hawthorne, "I propose that we organise a revolutionary government, appoint a president, ministers of finance, war and justice, and choose a place for an insurrectionary capital and base of operations; that deliberately and with dependable precautions of secrecy the finance minister gather from all who join us contributions of money or bullion up to their ability according to their inclination; that the war minister take a secret census of all weapons in the hands of our sympathisers; that, when we are ready and no sooner we assemble at whatever place has been selected, manufacture gunpowder, cast cannon, and proclaim a revolt. Our high-spirited adherents, all skilled in the use of arms, will be effective soldiers at once. I have no doubt of success."

"Only demigods could carry out such a plan," spoke Sinforiano Guerreros, his shoulders drooping in his blue uniform.

"And what were the refugees of Covadonga but demigods?" Hawthorne came back at him. "What but a demigod was Don Ruy Diaz de Bivar, El Cid Campeador? What but demigods were the knights of Compostella, of Alcantara and Calatrava? Were not Solis, Mendoza and Irala as much demigods as Columbus and Pizarro? You come of a race of heroes; dare to be such as your fathers!"

"Ah," sighed Don Bermudo Larreta, a man totally bald, though not old in appearance. "We are degenerates; we

hate and we cringe. We are not capable of wonders like you Americanos, who threw off the yoke of mighty England and remain free from her and free of any tyrant from among yourselves. The yoke of Spain dropped off us without any effort on our part; the yoke of Porteño arrogance we escaped by the grace of God, only to saddle upon us a servitude more galling than either."

"Are the men of Buenos Aires," said Hawthorne, "the Porteños you despise, better men than you? They cast off the yoke of Spain. Twice they drove out the veteran troops of mighty England. You crushed the Porteño invasion not only by the grace of God but by force of arms. The heroes of Paraguay, of Tacuari were no less demigods than the men of Covadonga. With such heroes among you what I outline should be well within our powers."

Then spoke General Jerman Caballero.

"Not one of us has thought of such a plan. I give you, Señor Don Guillermo, all the credit for the thought, admitting it to possess the value you attribute to it. Now supposing that we adopt your plan, having it from you, supposing us capable of carrying to a successful issue, what do you conceive as the advantage to us from your presence among us a fellow-conspirator and helper?"

At this moment Parlett was distinctly heard to whistle, hum and begin to sing his warning air. Hardly had the first bars of Little Bo Peep sounded through the warehouse when everybody assumed an air of elaborate lack of interest in Hawthorne and each couple or group began a laborious and deliberate local conversation, or devoted themselves individually to sipping wine.

There appeared in the doorway a brisk little man wearing a plain black cocked hat, sober grey clothes, with mother-of-pearl knee and shoe buckles, and a short hanger.

A chorus greeted him as he bowed and smiled all round the room.

Hawthorne observed him with interest, for since he had reached Asuncion, except when the Dictator had called his lieutenants, this was the first decently clad man he had heard addressed otherwise than as "Don," and the first he had heard spoken to by his last name.

"Well, Orrego," said Dr. Bargas, "what can I do for you?"

"I come," Orrego replied, "to test those eleven *tercios* of *maté* you bought of Pablo Carbonel yesterday."

"Certainly," said the Doctor, waving a hand. "But have a mouthful of wine first."

He went down on his knee by the cask. Then, as Orrego bowed all round the room and drank, Dr. Bargas bantered him.

"Did you forget your *calador* this time also?"

"No, not this time," said Orrego; "here it is all right."

He displayed, holding it by a handle much like a sabre-hilt, a long, sharp-pointed, tapering steel tube, open all down one side, and with the edges of the slot sharp as razors.

The generals abruptly rose and sought other roosting places.

Orrego approached the pile of bales on which they had sat, Bargas at his elbow, indicating the eleven.

"He," Don Porfirio Somellera explained to Hawthorne, "is the chief *reconocidor* of the custom-house.

"He tests all *maté*, or tobacco, exported or imported."

Orrego verified the marks on the *tercios*, checking each off in his little book, and then plunged his *calador* into one, screwed it round and withdrew it. Tapping the tube above a sheet of paper, he folded the sheet over the powder that fell out, and so proceeded with the other bales, finally pocketing the eleven little sample packets.

Then he picked up his tankard from the table, bowed again to the company, drained it, and bustled out.

"One of the Dictator's chief spies," whispered Don Porfirio to Hawthorne.

"Shall I now answer your question, Señor Don Jer-man?" Hawthorne asked Caballero.

"By all means," the general bowed, as with the others he reseated himself on the tested *tercios*.

"How many of you," Hawthorne queried, "know how to repair a musket or pistol or to reset a flint?"

No one spoke.

"Who among you," he proceeded, "can smelt iron-ore, make horse-shoes, produce good steel, forge knives, swords or bayonets?"

Not a word replied.

"Which of you," he continued, "can bore a spiked cannon?"

Silence reigned.

"Can any of you," he went on, "cast cannon and make gunpowder?"

All were mute.

"I," said Hawthorne, "am expert in all those arts."

"We recognise the value," up spoke Don Hilarion Decoud, a doctor of laws, "of a man so variously skilled in such an attempt as you propose. But these matters relate to the materials required for the plan. Observe, I am not opposing you, nor lukewarm towards you, Señor Don Guillermo, but what help may we especially expect from you, help which no one of us could lend, in the furtherance of the plan itself?"

"I am in Paraguay," said Hawthorne, "ostensibly to exploit the *maté* industry for my own profit, through the enrichment of Paraguay by the introduction of new and improved methods throughout all stages of the production, collection, preparation and export. I have already interested the Dictator in my schemes. If I succeed in winning his favour as I anticipate I shall be accorded every opportunity to familiarise myself with every part of your country and especially with the neighbourhood of the capital. Incidentally, I shall of course note the military value of every rise of ground, range of hills, hill, stream and ford. I cannot help so doing, for my experience with General San Martín in Cuyo and General Bolívar in Granada has made valuation of the features of a country an instinct with me. Thus I can supplement invaluable your own judgments as to the best base of operations for us, best lines of defence in the early stages of our operations, and best line of attack later on. As it is usual for Americans to interest themselves in all forms of profit-getting I can quite naturally take up any opportunity that offers. I am told that iron is abundant about Ibicuy and Caapucú. I might start a mine and set up smelting works, as I hear that the iron for your horse-shoes is all imported into Paraguay and none produced here and is very high in price. Thus smelting iron would be profitable at once. The profits could be turned into our fund in charge of the finance minister. A full two-thirds of the



iron smelted might be easily concealed until we had a store sufficient to cast cannon.

"Of course, I know we should have bronze for field-pieces, but on the one hand that is unthinkable, and, on the other, I know how to cast iron cannon almost as good as the best bronze cannon ever made, for the secret has been communicated to me by its discoverer, a Massachusetts inventor.

"However, what I hear of the country between here and these iron-fields leads me to conjecture that no good natural line of defence exists there to help us repulse the first rush of the Dictator's troops before their loss of confidence and our gain of confidence puts us on an equality after the first encounter."

"Wonderful!" ecstatically exclaimed Don Cipriano Doméque.

And Valeriano Zevallos interjected:

"It is true. There are no natural obstacles between here and Caapucú. The hills and streams give no strategic advantage in either direction."

"Such being the case," Hawthorne continued, "we might open a mine and smelter at Atirá, where I hear iron is found, and between which and Asuncion there is a strong line of natural defences."

"That is entirely true," General Zevallos put in.

"Thus," Hawthorne summed up, "I conceive I can be of use, at every stage of the enterprise, in ways no Paraguayan could emulate."

"Which is manifestly the fact," Don Bernardo admitted in a tone of benediction.

"Furthermore," Hawthorne continued, "observe that any sort of investigation in any part of the country, any amount of riding about, surveying, measuring and mapping, any sort and number of questions about food supply, water, cattle, horses, timber and minerals will come quite naturally from a promoter like myself and excite no suspicion, while any such activities on the part of any Paraguayan would result in his instant incarceration."

"Obviously true," ejaculated Don Hilarion.

"More than that," Hawthorne wound up, "and similarly beyond possibility for any native here, I expect to induce the Dictator to welcome my advice to such an extent that he

will give me free access to his prisons and barracks. I may do much in obtaining alleviations or even release for members of our party, if imprisoned, and may go far in discovering any differences of temper among the regiments, which knowledge might be of use in battle."

"Marvellous!" cried Don Cipriano Doméque.

"How," Don Hilarion queried, "do you expect to acquire such influence with our stern and unapproachable Dictator?"

"I could not describe just how," Hawthorne answered confidently, "but I have made a good beginning. I called on him this morning for the first time. We were much interrupted, and he asked me to cut short the interview, under plea of pressure of business. Yet my brief outline of my projects relating to *yerba* so impressed him that he invited me to sup with him to-night."

At this General Gamarra burst out:

"I begin to doubt but Prudencio was right! This smells like a trap! Are we to believe that this is really a stranger, unknown to the Dictator until to-day? Does not this sound as if he were a confidant, masquerading as a revolutionist to ensnare us?"

"Absurd, Rogelio!" Don Gregorio retorted. "Have you not seen Candiotti's letter, and Perrichon's?"

"Can any one credit," Gamarra persisted, "that a total stranger could so captivate in one morning our unsocial Dictator?"

"What wonder," interposed Don Cipriano Doméque, "if he talked *yerba* to the Dictator as he has talked insurrection to us? We have gloomed in impotent hate, we, his countrymen, natives of this Paraguay. Behold this northerner, not yet two days in Asuncion, indicates to us resources of resistance any one of us might have seen; strategic points any one of us might have noticed; matters every one of us ought to have perceived always; makes us feel it the most natural thing in the world for us to take advantage of them; raises before our eyes such pictures of organisation, victory and success that we feel them already as realities! I believe in him. I can comprehend how Francia would be as fascinated by prospects of revenue as we by hope of liberty."

Dr. Bargas added:

"I call on any man who does not trust Don Guillermo Atorno instantly to leave my premises."

No man stirred, and many voices chorused:

"We believe in him."

"I also believe," said a man in a violet velvet coat, pushing in from the bedroom, "but I want to ask questions."

"Don Mauricio Zelaya," Dr. Bargas introduced him, "is one of our richest ship-owners."

"What I wish to know," said Don Mauricio, "is how you, never having been in our country, made up your mind to espouse the cause of the old Spaniards against a Creole? Your nation broke away from the King of England and maintains an independent government; I should have imagined that a native of your country would side with Creoles against Spaniards!"

"I conceived of the situation," Hawthorne said, "not as oppression of Spaniards by a Creole, but of all respectable citizens by a tyrant. I had and I have no idea of assisting in any way to restore the authority of the King of Spain in Paraguay, having fought that power zealously in Cuyo and Granada. But I conceive that the re-establishment here of the power of Spain, if it ever comes about, is no present question for us; if it results from anything I or you do it will be in ways none of us can foresee. The population of Paraguay, I take it, would permit no body of Paraguayans to reproclaim Paraguay's reunion with Spain and allegiance to Spain's king. I believe that a very small body of Paraguayans may bring to pass the extirpation of despotism in Paraguay and the establishment of a just government here."

"Considering my first question disposed of," Don Mauricio pursued, "I have another. How did you conclude, at a distance, knowing the unreliability of rumours, that the Dictator is a tyrant who ought to be overthrown, and we oppressed citizens worthy of your risking your life for us?"

"That is really three questions," Hawthorne replied. "I did infer him a despot and you oppressed. I find I am right. I have yet to make up my mind whether he merits downfall and you deserve liberty."

"This is monstrous!" broke in Gamarra. "You have not yet made up your mind and you ask us to risk our lives!"

"I am risking my life now," Hawthorne reminded him

calmly, "by conferring with you all here. You risk yours no more than I. What I intend myself and what I propose to you is this. Organise an insurrectionary government as I have outlined. Meanwhile I will study Paraguay and its Dictator. I may find him such a tyrant that any conceivable substitute government would be an improvement. What I saw of him this morning partly inclines me that way already. I may hesitate, as his character is so complicated and contradictory. In that case my decision will depend upon you. If you show yourselves capable of effectual organisation without blunders or squabbles you will have proved yourselves more worthy to rule Paraguay. Lastly I may decide that with all his faults he is the best government Paraguay is capable of producing.

"In that last case you will be no worse off. We are all pledged to secrecy; oaths are superfluous between gentlemen. I shall do what I can to enrich myself here by furthering industries. Your finance-minister and war-minister will destroy their papers, and the projected insurrection will evaporate."

"This is unbearable! ridiculous!" Gamarra shouted. "This is insulting! This is unendurable!"

"Be silent, Rogelio," Don Gregorio admonished him. "We elders do not resent what we all deserve. An outsider sees not only opportunities we ignore, but the faults that hamper us."

"For my part," said Don Hilarion, "I think he talks sense."

"I have a third question," Don Mauricio put in quietly, "or a fifth, by your count. What do you expect to gain for yourself by assisting us, supposing we succeed?"

"Nothing," said Hawthorne, "except the satisfaction of knowing I have used my powers according to my opportunities for the benefit of my fellow men."

"Pardon me, Señor Don Guillermo," said Don Fernando de la Mora. "You speak sincerely, no doubt. But do you not really anticipate, deep in your heart, that you will be finally selected chief magistrate of Paraguay if your plan succeeds?"

"I do not!" Hawthorne disclaimed vigorously. "I think it altogether improper that any but natives rule any land. It may be found advisable during the fighting to

appoint me to some military command, which I shall instantly resign at the establishment of peace. But at no time will I accept any civil office. In fact, I think I should be absent from all your deliberations, except full meetings of our association, and in them I should have no vote. Liberty for Paraguay must be won by Paraguayans. And when liberty is won I depart, unless I prefer to remain as a simple merchant."

"This is unbelievable!" bawled Gamarra. "This is a clumsy bait."

"For shame, Rogelio!" Don Bernardo admonished him. "May not any countryman of the great-souled Don Jorge Washington be such a man as Don Jorge?"

"You do not need," Hawthorne said with dignity, "to cite my country or my greatest countryman. South America has produced such men as I aim to emulate. General San Martin is such a man as I endeavour to be."

Hereupon rose a tumultuous discussion, in the course of which Gamarra was made to appear a minority of one, and himself half-hearted at that.

Dr. Bargas and Don Gregorio called a vote on Hawthorne's proposal. After a long argument, in which Hawthorne took no part, it was accepted, the acceptance made unanimous, and the affirmation endorsed by acclamation by those in the inner room and yard.

"I'll stand by the rest of you," Colonel Guerreros declared. "But I think it would be far better to sound the troops, seize a barrack, and master the city at once."

"Pooh! Sinforiano," General Cabañas retorted. "Mal-lada tried that once. Once is enough."

"I want to ask," Yegros enunciated slowly, with that goggling expression which made his porcine face appear almost froglike, "what the minister of justice is for?"

"To decide disputes," Hawthorne explained, "if any occur."

"Don't see any use for one," Yegros declared.

But several voices called:

"You never see anything, Fulgencio, except a mark for a bullet or sabre!"

"It is then decided!" Don Gregorio summed up, "that we all approve Don Guillermo's ideas as the best plan, and that we pledge ourselves to consider it individually and in

groups and to adopt it or reject it at our next meeting?"

After a general affirmation, he said:

"This then is the outcome."

"The outcome," spoke a voice from the door into the *patio*, "may be very different."

Hawthorne started at the voice, glanced at the speaker, and sat petrified.

His thunderstruck amazement subtly communicated a sense of alarm to all present.

All eyes followed his stare at the door.

There was a general cackle of dry laughter.

"You took him for El Supremo in person," said Don Jerman. "Not unnaturally. Like me also he has the Caballero nose!"

"Allow me, Señor Don Guillermo," said Dr. Bargas, "to present to you Don Estanislao Machain."

Hawthorne stared at the dry, spare figure in pearl grey, astonished to find among the conspirators the man Francia had saved from penury, still more amazed at his resemblance in tone and profile to his exalted cousin.

"If you listen to me," Machain said, "the outcome may be easier attained and simpler."

"We all know your only plan, Estanislao," Padre Bogarin said, "and while some of us might approve, it would be only as a last resort."

The chorus of voices echoed Padre Lisardo's view.

After some more discussion of detail Don Bernardo said:

"We are to be neither Spaniards nor Creoles, but all Paraguayans. Word will be passed when we next meet. Then we shall choose whether to adopt this plan or reject it and Don Guillermo's help. If we adopt it we shall elect officers and proceed to carry it out."



BOOK II

CECILIA





## CHAPTER XII

### THE LIBRARY

AT the entrance to the Government House Hawthorne found Francia's Bopî squatting by the wall chatting with the guard, saw him rise at sight of him and understood him to say in Guarani:

"*Baéh! Picó!*" ("This is the man.")

Admitted by the guard, he was conducted across the *patio*, through a largish paved passage-way, into a garden shaded by many orange-trees, shut in on three sides by the Palacio and adjuncts of it, opening on the fourth north-westward upon that broadish inlet-lagoon which he had, when he landed two days before, noticed sprawling south-west of the old Jesuits' bridge by the landing stairs.

Under the orange trees the Dictator was pacing, his sabre-sheath slapping his calves. He was bare-headed and instead of coat and waistcoat wore over his plain-frilled shirt only a flowered dressing-gown of the cheapest calico.

He greeted Hawthorne cordially and heartily, entirely as an equal and much as a trusted intimate, with a very engaging demeanour and every appearance of pleasure, and offered him snuff in a manner as courtly as Don Vicente's own.

"We sup out here," he said. "For I have heard that I share with your countrymen, as with the English, a dislike of stuffy rooms and a love of fresh air. But Cosme is late with supper, as usual. Before it is dark let me show you my library."

Hawthorne, acquiescing enthusiastically, followed Francia into a room opening on the short south-west end of the garden. It had a big window next the door and another in the short wall towards the inlet. The floor was brick, visible here and there under an amazing litter of torn papers, among which showed discarded goose-quills, corks, and bits of twine. A large table occupied the middle of the room; a small table was set across the far window,

opposite which, against the other short wall, towered a tall *bufete*, like Dr. Bargas', but much plainer in design and construction. By its corners were low stands bearing an electric machine and an air-pump; close to each stood a large armillary sphere, one celestial, the other terrestrial. Between the big table and the long wall by the inner door was a small chess-table, the board of black and yellow inlaid wood, the tall chessmen of ivory, white, and stained red. In the far corner a six-foot brass telescope slanted atilt on a straddling tripod of rosewood, brass-bound at the joints. Between the two windows was a tripod nearly as large bearing a fine theodolite. Between the outer door and window bulged a portly, red-earthenware water-jar, bigger than a hogshead. By it a slender spiral-stemmed stand, with three little claw-feet, proffered a jug and goblet. The chairs were of the prevalent local pattern, heavy, with tall straight backs and ox-hide seats worn glossy and brown with long use.

On the table was a confusion of papers, amid which showed a plain old silver inkstand and out of which stood up a dozen or more simple silver candlesticks, holding tall tapers most of whose wicks were white and fresh. Four were burning, evidently just lighted.

The walls were lined with books. Hawthorne, surveying the room, counted eleven sets of shelves, each of six tiers. Judging each set about six feet long, he ran over some mental computations, calculated that there could not be more than 3,200 books at most, that there were certainly 1,500, and pitched on 2,500 as about a safe reckoning.

"What do you find fault with?" Francia queried sharply.

"I find no fault!" Hawthorne disclaimed, startled.

"You have the air," Francia said severely, "of noting something that might be improved."

Hawthorne laughed.

"I was thinking," he confessed, "that if it were my study, I should transpose some of the fittings."

"How?" Francia shot at him.

"I should put the telescope by the door," said Hawthorne, "where it would be easiest wheeled out into the garden; set the celestial sphere in its place between the two windows, where it can most easily be read; stand the theod-

olite in the far corner, and locate the terrestrial globe in the theodolite's place by the window."

"Good advice!" said Francia. "They shall be so arranged to-morrow morning. I begin to perceive the kind of modifications you hope to apply to the *yerba* trade and why you are so confident that you can improve anything you put your mind to."

"Thank you for the compliment," said Hawthorne. "At the moment my mind is filled with wonder at your exploit in forming such a collection of books in this part of the world."

"You consider it a feat?" Francia beamed.

"You have here, I conjecture," Hawthorne said, "certainly one-third and probably one-half of all the books now in existence south of the tropic of Capricorn."

"Ah," said Francia, "I perceive that I have been rightly informed as to one trait of you North Americans; that you unduly value mere quantity."

"We can appreciate quality also," said Hawthorne, somewhat nettled. "For instance, this is probably the most valuable book in your possession."

He went round the table to near the inner door and indicated a folio of the *Siete Partidas*, printed at Salamanca in 1490.

"Why!" Francia exclaimed, "that is a mere curiosity; an old tome of primitive laws."

"Spain's first code," Hawthorne rejoined. "But that is not where its value lies. It is an example of very early printing, almost the first done in Spain, and is in a beautiful early binding, in perfect condition."

"I see," said Francia, "you know already more about some of my books than I know myself."

With a sort of admiration he watched Hawthorne make the round of the room.

The long wall, from the inner door to the end and around to the window, was filled with law-books, mostly in Spanish, but of those by the window many in Latin. Between the windows were more Spanish books, among which Hawthorne recognised duplicates of the volumes he had seen at Mayorga's, not only the same authors, but the same editions and bindings. Besides these he noticed Calderon's and Lope de Vega's dramas, a translation of Gil Blas, and two algebras.

Between the window and the door were Latin and Greek books, nearly full sets of the Delphini editions, a one-volume corpus of poetry in each language, a big Leyden edition of Vitruvius, an Amsterdam Aristotle and some other Dutch folios, one of Euclid's Elements.

Beyond the door were French books, Bossuet's sermons, Fénelon's "Télémaque," Rollin's "Ancient History" and "History of Rome," Volney's "Ruins," "Tissot on Medicine," Rousseau's "Social Contract" and "Emile," with others, and many of Voltaire's writings, besides Molière's "Comedies," and the tragedies of Racine and Corneille. With these were a number of scientific works, most notable Laplace's small astronomy and his huge "Celestial Mechanics." There was also a copy of Galland's "translation" of the "Arabian Nights"; a number of Latin theological works and Spanish books of piety, with them about two dozen German books, including Schiller's "Robbers" and Goethe's "Werther"; about the same number in Italian, mostly poets, as Ariosto, Tasso and Dante; and to Hawthorne's great surprise, a full shelf of books in English. He was astonished that there should be any English books at all in Asuncion, and amazed at the respectable array on this shelf.

He saw substantially, even handsomely bound copies of Milton, Addison, Steele, Swift, Pope, Defoe, Richardson, Smollett, Sterne and Goldsmith.

"You are surprised"—Francia interpreted his look as usual—"that I have so many English books. They were given to me by a young English merchant, then a valued friend of mine, later my malignant enemy, since I would not govern Paraguay to further his profit.

"I have not read them all, though I have looked over every one; sampled each in places, and puzzled out not a little with the aid of my two dictionaries and my grammar, wherever the matter attracted me. One only have I read entire, a poet young Señor Robertson seemed to regard as barbarous and unpolished. He preferred the poet Pope, a satirist whose verse displeases me. I esteem more highly this dramatist; I put him even on a level with Lope de Vega."

He laid in Hawthorne's hand a cheap, small-print, three-volume edition of Shakespeare.

As Hawthorne was commending Francia's taste Bopí announced supper.

This Hawthorne found laid on a small round table, at which no more than three persons could possibly have been seated. It had a single standard with three plain, uncarved feet. This was the dining table of the absolute lord of that part of the world.

At the table Francia insisted on Hawthorne seating himself first.

"Shall we begin with *maté*?" he asked.

"I take *maté*," Hawthorne said, "as often as I get a chance."

Francia himself prepared a silver cup of the national beverage, tasted it, wiped the *bombilla* on a napkin, and passed the cup to Hawthorne, who the moment the liquid touched his tongue removed the tube from his mouth and exclaimed:

"Why! this is *caa cuys*!"

As the words struck on his own ears, he remembered Don Vicente's warning and remained rigid, his mouth open, his right hand holding the *bombilla* in the air, the picture of consternation.

Francia cackled a two-note laugh.

"I laid a trap for you!" he chuckled. "You said this morning that hide *tercios* impart to *yerba* a flavor disagreeable to Europeans. I have always held that the differences epicures claim to detect in *yerba* are all imaginary. I see I have been in the wrong. You recognise the best selected bud-powder at first taste. I see there may be something in your notions."

Hawthorne only stared.

"Take your *yerba* before it gets cold," Francia admonished him, "and let me have mine."

Hawthorne hastened to obey.

As the dinner progressed he found the viands excellent, but the wine poor. He, however, scarcely noticed his food, all his faculties busy with listening to Francia's talk and answering a brisk series of questions, first about America, then concerning Washington, and later about Napoleon. Francia had heard only vague rumours of the Hundred Days and Waterloo, and displayed some approach to both sympathy and enthusiasm.

"Think of him!" he said, "marooned on that lonely rock to die like a caged condor! And that is to be his end! After all those titanic struggles, all those dazzling victories, this is the end of his splendid administrative powers! Somehow, no figure in all the history of mankind appeals to me as he does. I feel his downfall as a loss to me. I feel a personal pride in such marvels of human prowess as his Austerlitz campaign. I cannot help imagining how I should have felt to know him safely established as Emperor of Europe. He is the only human being who ever lived who makes one feel he ought to have become emperor of the whole world. Do you never have such thoughts of him?"

"Often," Hawthorne confessed. "But——"

"I know what you mean," Francia took him up. "In your head you believe, as I do, that all governments should be democratic; that every nation should be a republic, where every man has an equal voice, as in your country, in the determination of policies, and the rulers should be temporary servants of their country, chosen because their fellow-citizens do and can trust them. But in your heart you feel that real efficiency in administration never has come to pass on earth except by the untrammelled activity of one competent man, however he came by his power."

"I think all men," said Hawthorne, "however fanatical republicans they may be, feel something like that in respect to men like Bonaparte and yourself."

Francia's face showed a gleam of pleased vanity, but he ignored the compliment and pursued:

"One thinks of Napoleon in 'ifs.' 'If' he had retreated instantly from Prussia after its devastation, leaving the memory of that success to serve as an example of what he could do, who would ever have dared to attack him again? 'If' he had made it his aim to hold only Italy and France from the Pyrenees to the Rhine, giving that great, rich, populous realm time to recuperate in peace and to develop complete loyalty to him, what could ever have dislodged him?"

"And yet one feels his empire had to expand continually or perish at once; one feels him already doomed to failure from before his first victories in Italy.

"I suppose there were other factors, perhaps many

other factors, perhaps more important factors. But what impresses me as crucial was his failure to find the right woman for a wife. He secured his first important command, the opportunity to prove his greatness at Lodi, Arcola and Rivoli, by relieving a man in power of a mistress who wearied him. He might never have had his chance at all had he not purchased it by a discreditable transaction. But by that very transaction, by marrying a barren widow, he made it forever impossible for him to become the unshakable sovereign, the founder of earth's greatest dynasty, which he later saw he might have been.

"Had he married younger, married a woman like his mother, had he had a family of strong sons already grown or half grown around him, by the Peace of Vienna, he would never have been unseated by any coalition. A cool-headed, warm-hearted consort, mother of his children, would have steadied his soaring aspirations and kept him to possibilities, vast enough even for his ambitions.

"Had he even found in his step-child and adopted son a capable and adequate heir he might have weathered every storm and be now invincible and sublime."

Hawthorne was too much astonished to make any remark. He fancied Francia was thinking of Petrona Zevallos.

The Dictator resumed:

"Marriage, the right marriage, that is an essential to any great human success in any walk of life. Without that all is dust and ashes, all is dead-sea fruit. An heir, an heir equal to his duties, acceptable to himself, acclaimed by his people, that is indispensable to a successful autocrat."

Hawthorne found no suitable comment and remained silent. He had been waiting for an opportunity to talk of his projects, but he had too much sense to thrust them forward until the right moment.

The meal ended, to Hawthorne's surprise, with coffee and cigars. This Porteño fashion, at least, had penetrated from Buenos Aires to Asuncion.

Scarcely were the cigars drawing well when Francia, with one of his sudden changes of front, saved Hawthorne the trouble of leading up to what he most wanted to talk of.

"I have been thinking over what you said this morning," he began, "and in all such matters I like to come to the



point at once. Suppose we begin this way. You undoubtedly have in mind some special privileges which you expect me to accord you in exchange for the enrichment of Paraguay which you promise. Now, supposing I grant all you desire, what shall I be granting? Your full answer to that may bring us to an understanding quicker than any other line of approach."

Hawthorne, a bit dazed, certainly taken unawares, reflected during a puff or two.

"I dream," he said, "of the creation of a world-wide demand for *yerba* and a monopoly for Paraguay of its production. If that cannot be brought to pass I hope at least for a greatly increased foreign consumption of *maté* and a good share of the profits for this country. Let us aim at the first, and only reduce ourselves to the second as a last resort, remembering that whatever we attempt to secure our great object will further our lesser.

"If the establishment of universal popularity for *maté* and exclusive production of *yerba* by Paraguay is to come through me, I should first familiarise myself with the localities and methods of its present collection, then with all localities in Paraguay where the plant grows wild or is cultivated."

"It is nowhere cultivated in Paraguay," Francia put in, "and the former plantations of the Jesuits in *Misiones* have relapsed into wildernesses."

"In that case, Most Excellent Sir," Hawthorne proceeded, "I should visit and inspect those ruined plantations, examine the soil and view the arrangements of the plants, if any traces of it are left after nearly fifty years of neglect. Then I should traverse all the localities in Paraguay suitable for cultivation of the plant, visit all the wild natural *yerbales*, and finally complete a journey entirely around the outskirts of the country, making a detour up each considerable river tributary to the Paraguay or Paraná on either side, to ascertain whether the plant grows only in Paraguay or whether the *yerbales* extend into Brazil also; if so, whether the *yerba* trees there are of the best species or of inferior kinds. After I have accomplished that much we shall know whether the golden possibility of a complete permanent monopoly is within our grasp or we must be content with such profits as accrue

to the possessors of the most desirable quality of this merchandise, pioneers at entering and creating a world-wide market."

"Señor Don Guillermo," Francia said, "you Americans are indeed wonderful. Had any other man spoken thus to me I should have regarded his utterances as the vaporings of one demented. From your lips they come as the sane and practicable plans of a man perfectly capable of pushing them to a successful conclusion.

"A visit to Misiones is a matter of time, expense and risk. You talk of it as if it were a stroll from here to the Cathedral. An expedition to a *yermal* involves great personal exertion, exposure to heat, thirst, insects and danger of the fevers and other diseases of our primeval forests. You talk of surveying all our *yerbales*, and it sounds not like delirium, but entirely within your powers. You lightly speak of beating the bounds of Paraguay, a journey, or series of journeys, which occupied five years of the life of Don Felix de Azara, commissioner of both governments for the delimitation of their mutual frontiers, backed by all the power and resources of the kings of Portugal and Spain. Besides Don Felix, no man, so far as I know, has accomplished this exploit. You speak as lightly of exploring river-gorges haunted by wild tribes, as primitive and heathenish as before Mendoza sailed up from the ocean, who give no quarter to any white man, and torture their prisoners. And you make me believe you can accomplish all you talk of.

"Do you know, Señor Don Guillermo, that I consider it most fortunate for me that you have come to Paraguay to exploit the *yerva* industry? I should tremble for the welfare of my Guaranies and for my security in power here had you, applying to your purpose the faculties you disclose to me, come to Paraguay to foment a revolution."

Hawthorne did not lose his self-control. He did not start. The dusk had long before given place to moonlit night. He was sure it was too dark to make out his face clearly; moreover, he was equally sure that, in fact, he did not change colour; he knew he had not altered his demeanour in any way. This might be an accidental bull's-eye, though the chances against its being fortuitous were millions to one. He expected to hear a brief order, to see

the soldiers rush in to bind him. But he kept his countenance, instantaneously realising that his only safety lay in treating the words precisely as they were uttered. And Francia's expression and tone carried no veiled threat, no ironical feline menace.

"Still more fortunate for me, I imagine," Hawthorne succeeded in saying in an easy tone and with an unforced smile.

"Yet you have participated in insurrectionary fighting?" Francia pursued.

"I have," Hawthorne confessed. "But how did you learn that?"

"From Banfi," the Dictator informed him matter-of-factly. "Your ship-captain, of course, gave me a full account of all he knew of his passengers."

"I should think," said Hawthorne, anxious to shift Francia's attention, "that you would be more interested in my fellow passengers than in myself."

"Perhaps I am." The Dictator smiled. "But for the moment let us stick to you."

Whereupon Hawthorne found himself compelled to give a very full account of his friendships with Bolivar and San Martin and of the fighting in Cuyo and Granada. Not until Hawthorne was effectually pumped dry on these topics did Francia's interrogatories shift to the subject of the voyage up the river and similarly question him about Beltran and Ventura.

"Three times captured by the French!" he exclaimed. "And three escapes? I must see more of him. Saw Napoleon? Had an interview with him? I must see more of this young hero. I must talk to him of the Great Man. And I suppose our wandering heiress found him irresistible. I presume we shall be having a wedding shortly at San Bernardino?"

"I think not," Hawthorne replied.

"You surprise me," the Dictator exclaimed. "These must be extraordinary young people."

"You must remember," Hawthorne explained, "that Beltran, while not actually affianced before he left Paraguay, felt himself in some sort bound to another heiress here. He never spoke of the matter directly to me, but I inferred as much from some generalisations he let fall.

Since reaching Asuncion I have heard what leads me to fancy the lady is Señorita Angelica Recalde."

"True," Francia ruminated. "I had forgotten that affair. It was his father's idea. His grandmother was opposed to it and will most likely do all she can to break it up."

"Then again," Hawthorne said, "Señorita Velarde is a most unusual young woman. She has very definite ideas on the subject of matrimony, partly her own, partly absorbed in England and in my country. She talked freely of her ideas to me, to Beltran, to both of us together. Sometimes Doña Juanita participated in our discussions, sometimes not. She hooted at Señorita Velarde's notions. But Ventura maintained her contentions that to marry at random the first youth that pleases is likely to ruin a woman's life; that a woman had better not wed at all than link herself to the wrong man; that deliberate choice was likely to be most happy; that for a husband, at least from her own point of view, not looks or manners or lineage or wealth, but intellect was the most important requisite. She dwelt much on her admiration for greatness of soul and vast powers of mind. In his words, at least, Beltran agreed with her."

"You cannot but have noticed long ago," Francia said, "that that sort of talk between young folks is a species of love-making. A girl talks of intellect, but she has none; she is all emotions."

"Ventura," Hawthorne maintained, "has much more than emotions. She has intellect and serious purposes. She was too absorbed in the idea of doing her duty to her father to think of love-making. Her chief idea was to requite her father for all he had done for her, to apply her accomplishments to making his old age happy and her attainments to caring for his property."

Hereupon Francia began questioning Hawthorne about Ventura.

"Half a year at Paris at the Emperor's court?" he exclaimed. "I must talk with this young woman. Plays chess? Can hold her own against you or Beltran? I must see what that means. Suppose we go back to my library and have a game of chess?"

Hawthorne, of course, assented.

On their way the Dictator said:

"I had changed my mind since this morning and meant to send word to *Madrina Juana* that I could not come to Itapúa for her *fiesta*. But I must see this amazing young woman and hear from her own lips her account of her adventures, and especially of Napoleon's court."

In the library he lighted all the candles from the one flickering, guttered stump still burning.

Over the pieces he said:

"Do you know when I may expect the fifth and sixth volumes of Laplace's '*Astronomy*'?"

"I did not even know," Hawthorne said, "how many volumes were out or that the work was still incomplete."

"Checkmate," said the Dictator finally. "I beat you fairly. You did your best. You are no mean player and might beat me two games out of five. If Ventura can play you, when you give her odds of only a queen's bishop, she must be a marvel."

Hawthorne rose to go.

"I have kept you up," he said.

"It is agreeable to be kept up," said Francia. "I have had little companionship these many years. Sit down. Before you go let us recur to your projects. If you really desire to risk your life in explorations, I shall give you every facility for success and safety. If, after investigations, you desire to make experiments with plantations, I will grant that, too.

"But you must know that laziness is the curse of Paraguay. The Jesuits established *yerba* plantations because they had gathered their converts into villages called *reducciones* and acquired such control of them that they induced them to labour daily, as a part of their efforts towards winning heaven and escaping hell. The incentive was perpetual preaching. The cost in cash was nothing. The *reducciones* are all mere villages of *Tapé* Indians, as we call Christianised natives. No native works more than he must and no wife more than her husband makes her. I cannot imagine them working for wages, at least not for any that would make *yerba*-raising profitable for their employers; scarcely for any at all.

"Now let me ask you, how did you expect to get labourers?"

"If the plantations," Hawthorne said, "are a state venture, I had thought of beginning with convict labour."

"Convict labour!" Francia exclaimed. "We have no such thing in Paraguay."

"Better inaugurate it then," said Hawthorne simply.

"I don't know what you mean," Francia jerked out testily.

"Prison labour," Hawthorne explained.

"Be clear! Make yourself intelligible!" the Dictator snapped.

"I hear," Hawthorne expounded easily, "that Paraguay is the easiest policed area on this continent, and its populace the least criminal. But there must be some prisons and some prisoners. Any prison costs money and any prisoners are expensive to watch and to feed; most of all, in this climate, to keep alive in confinement. Now, if instead of penning up criminals in dungeons or *cuartels*, shut in cells or chained in *patios*, they were kept out of doors at work, they would keep alive and well instead of dying and sickening. They would cost less for doctoring and feeding. Also their work would help pay the cost of guarding them, or even pay it all, perhaps even yield a profit over all the cost of their keep and detention."

"That sounds as plausible as anything or everything you utter," Francia retorted. "But you forget that the main object in respect to any prisoner is to prevent escape. Out of doors, at work especially, escape is easy."

"From the little I have heard of the districts where *yerba* grows," Hawthorne argued, "it seems probable that a *yerbal* would be an ideal place for a penal settlement. Inaccessible except by river, surrounded by impenetrable forests and swamps peopled by merciless savages, prevention of escape seems simple. Two posts on the river to catch any convicts attempting to escape down stream, a few guards to forestall boatbuilding, and there you are. The Guaycarús, always on the watch for man-meat, would make escape unthinkable and charge nothing for acting as efficient patrols."

Francia cackled a laugh.

"You have always an eye for economy," he chuckled, "and a good eye. Granting all that, and I must say the idea recommends itself to me at once, do you imagine I

would empty my prisons totally into some distant penal colony?"

"No," said Hawthorne. "Many of the prisoners must be waiting trial or under short sentences. All such are best where they are. Of the rest many would be useless for outdoor labour. Criminals are poor stuff for labourers, anyhow. Only those judged fit would be drafted off."

"Who is to judge?" Francia queried.

"I, if you approve of my penal colony project," said Hawthorne.

Francia sat straight up in his chair, staring at Hawthorne across the half empty chess-board, with its huddle of captured pieces along each side. He leaned forward, the beams of the flickering tapers lighting up his right cheek, his smooth-shaven jaw and that side of his chisel nose. His eyes bored into Hawthorne's.

"You propose to me," he cried, "that I permit you to inspect my prisons! You lead up to this proposal by a long and carefully constructed series of alluring propositions! Señor Don Guillermo, you are too deep or too shallow. You should have been sharp enough to foresee, or you should not have been so dull as not to foresee, that such a suggestion from a newly arrived alien to a man in my position was bound to awake the liveliest suspicions. Could you entertain the idea that I would permit you to inspect my prisons?"

Hawthorne met his gaze squarely, as squarely as he met the issue.

"I did entertain the idea," he answered. "I meant even to ask your permission to inspect them. But I see no reason for suspicions. I confess that I should like to inspect the prisons of Asuncion. I have always gone over prisons as I have gone over arsenals, dockyards and other government enclosures wherever I have been permitted. I am quite ready to ask your leave here and now and even apart from any question of penal colony or *yerba* culture."

He paused, his eyes on the Dictator's.

Francia sat, manifestly dumbfounded.

Hawthorne placidly continued:

"I should be willing to wager anything right here, that it would be to your advantage to let me examine your prisons and report on them to you. I am absolutely disin-

terested and have had much experience. I never saw a prison I could not improve. I am certain I could show you how to save money on yours while increasing their efficiency as prisons, as easily as I showed you how to rearrange this room to better advantage."

"You are too persuasive," Francia snarled. "Shall I order your arrest, give you all the remainder of this night to make acquaintance with one of Asuncion's prisons and as many days as you have left to think of improvements and to meditate on efficiency of detention?"

Hawthorne kept his countenance and went on easily:

"As for suspicions, my original proposal was not for immediate inspection of your prisons, only that after I had made peregrination of all the *yerbales* and of the confines of Paraguay, if I saw enough chances of trade monopoly or trade advantage to make culture worth while, if culture appeared an improvement over collection, if methods of culture recommended themselves to me, if I came upon a locality suitable by soil, climate and surroundings for settlement as a penal colony, if you approved all these ideas, if you also approved of employing convict labour, if you further approved of me to select that labour, I might then be allowed to enter the prisons to choose felons for deportation. A proposition depending on so many 'ifs' seems to me no basis for even a shadow of suspicion."

Francia's set face relaxed.

"You are a convincing talker," he uttered. He stood up. "I think," he went on, "you spoke of leaving?"

Hawthorne, relieved, and now for the first time realising what his danger had been, rose, bowing wordlessly.

Francia took a candle from the table. Following his hand Hawthorne's eyes fell upon the characters on a big sheet of paper amid the welter on the table-top. He thought he saw a chance for a diversion.

"Excelentísimo Señor," he remarked, "I observe that you have been predicting an eclipse."

Francia stood petrified.

Hawthorne pointed to the paper.

Instantly Francia was a totally different man. The harsh, suspicious despot had vanished. In his place stood the eager, absorbed man of science.

"You understand calculating eclipses?" he queried.



"Fairly well," Hawthorne replied, his knees no longer trembling under him.

"Where did you learn?" the Dictator interrogated.

"At Harvard College," Hawthorne answered.

"Where is that?" came back the question.

"In Massachusetts," the American responded.

Francia shook his head.

"I know nothing of the educational institutions of your country," he confessed, and continued: "Could you go over and verify my calculations?"

"I should not venture upon that," Hawthorne disclaimed. "But if you give me your data I can compute the times of a lunar eclipse, or the times and track of a solar eclipse, and a comparison of our results would check up both."

"Excellent!" Francia exclaimed. "Decidedly we must see more of each other. But do not mar our intercourse by again suggesting inspecting my prisons, or perhaps my barracks or arsenal or treasury."

"I could improve any one of them," Hawthorne blurted out with reckless effrontery.

"Perhaps," Francia enunciated dryly. "But we will speak of all that no more. Let us stick to eclipses."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PERMIT

#### (1)

FRANCIA moved towards the outer door, checked himself, and turned to the other.

"Before I let you out," he said, "come with me to my window; you may hear something curious or interesting, if you understand enough Guarani."

He led the way across a passage and through a room to a tiny *patio* smelling of cooking and chiefly of garlic. Then they traversed a room, a passage, and again a room, and came out into a large moonlit courtyard faintly scented with gunpowder and leather. Beyond that they again traversed

a room, a passage and again a room, barely not pitch-dark, lighted only by faint glimmers from the moonlight on the walls outside. Next they came out into a smaller *patio*, smelling strongly of dried leaf tobacco.

As they went Francia monologued:

"You must know, Señor Don Guillermo, that it is my custom, the last thing at night, before I go to bed, to listen at this window and look out in case some petitioner desires to speak to me secretly or some suitor hopes for justice from a personal interview. The temper of the lowly here is peculiar and they are very timorous. Though any one of them might have access to me in my morning audience-hour, few or none ever present themselves publicly. The wrongs of the poor, their miseries and misfortunes are mostly communicated to me in whispers late at night.

"This custom of mine began while I was yet a young advocate, in the time of Intendente Don Joaquin de Alos. His courts always found for a Spaniard against a Creole or Guarani. It was notorious. So notorious did it become that licentiates refused to plead cases for Guaranies, even for Creoles. Advocates felt that to appear for a native branded them as disaffected in Don Joaquin's eyes. It was worse under Don Lazaro Espinosa. I ventured to defend a poor wretch manifestly guiltless and to prove the evidence against him perjured. Thereupon widows, labourers, artisans, small gardeners, and keepers of little shops began to resort to me in their troubles. They very generally came at night to the window of my study, where I read late. After I retired to Ibirai in Espinosa's time my clients mostly saw me at my uncle's parsonage, where I usually passed my mornings when I came into the city to court. But some rode out to Ibirai, some walked. Some even crept out there after dark. My study window there became a consultation wicket. Usually I would look out of it after I extinguished my candles, just before I went to bed.

"One night, I know not why, I forgot to do so. Alas, Señor Don Guillermo, how trifling are the neglects, how diabolical the coincidences that leave us lifelong regrets! For a week or more I had leaned out of that window, peered about, listened and called:

" 'Is any one there?'

"That night, wearied with some calculations, I threw myself on my cot and slept at once.

"That very day a poor keeper of a *pulperia*, of a little shop where he sold eatables and liquors, had been arrested on false information for participation in a stabbing affray. His wife, a comely young woman, had crawled out to Ibirai to ask my assistance. She was waiting outside my window at the very moment I sank into luxurious rest on my soft bed.

"Poor creature, her every step must have been agony as she toiled towards the help she hoped for. In her exhaustion and anxiety her child was born there on the hard ground sometime in the night as she waited in vain, too timid to call for aid. There the two pitiful corpses were found in the morning; cold, rigid reproaches to me for my neglect.

"Since that day my last act before I sleep is to make sure that I shall not again sin by omission in this respect."

From the tobacco-scented *patio* they crossed a passage and stopped at a heavily barred door, the big padlocks of which Francia unlocked one by one. Through it they entered a small room, entirely bare of furniture.

The one window, facing the door, was broad, sashless, low-silled, high-lintelled, and defended only by a grill of light bars, wide-spaced, set rather far out. Through it Hawthorne saw the moonlit side-wall of the Palacio glimmering on his left; the rest of the outlook was across the Plaza and the river. He realised that he was looking out of the lower window under the *mirador* which he had noticed in the corner of the Plaza that morning.

"Keep out of sight behind me," Francia whispered.

He leaned across the sill and spoke penetratingly in Guarani and then in Spanish.

"Is any one there?"

In a viperish, hissing whisper came back the words:

"*El Angel Vengador!*"

Hawthorne, craning over Francia's shoulder, saw the gleam of a long, thin blade flash between the bars from the left.

His quick left hand shot out like lightning and gripped the assassin's wrist.

The dagger tinkled on the sill.

With a shrill snarl the baffled miscreant wrenched free. Hawthorne was amazed to see a tall figure in a woman's *tupoi* and flat straw hat, fleeing noiselessly along the palace wall. It turned the corner westward before the Dictator spoke.

"Was that a woman?" he asked.

"It might have been a woman," Hawthorne replied, "or a man in a woman's clothes. I could not make out for certain."

"But the smell?" Francia queried in a loud, shrill, mounting tone, almost a scream. "Do you not notice that smell? Did you not notice that strange odour? Did you recognise it?"

"I smelt it," Hawthorne admitted. "I seem to smell it yet. It is unpleasant enough and like nothing else on earth. But it is like nothing I ever smelt before. I do not recognise it."

"Nor I, unfortunately," said Francia. "But it is like something, like two somethings I have smelt before, smelt often, and ought to remember well and recognise at once. If I could only recall where I have smelt either I should know where to search for that misfit Azrael."

"He missed you?" Hawthorne queried eagerly. "You are not hurt?"

"A little hurt," Francia replied, "but thanks to you, Don Guillermo, I am merely scratched. Let us get a light and stop the blood."

At the door of the room he reset the two bars and snapped the four padlocks.

"Better come back and do that," Hawthorne ventured. "You'll lose too much blood."

"It is only a skin-slash," Francia replied coolly, "and if I leave these bars unfastened there may be a dozen cut-throats hiding in different parts of my abode before I return to secure the door."

Once in his library again he lit more candles, using his right hand, his left holding his handkerchief to his throat.

The poniard had grazed the collar-bone and torn a ragged slit in the loose skin of the throat.

"This should have stitches," Hawthorne exclaimed.

"Can you stitch it?" Francia queried.

"I?" Hawthorne exclaimed. "You should have a surgeon."

"No more shall know of this," Francia declared, "than must know of it; that is you and I."

He rummaged in the drawers of the tall *bufete*, produced everything necessary, and showed no sign of wincing while Hawthorne put in three stitches.

Francia soaked a dressing of lint with a brown liquid from a Dublin-Stout bottle.

"Guarani eye-lotion," he explained. "I don't know what they make it of, but every cut treated with it heals by first intention. By day after to-morrow this will hardly feel sore."

"Shall you go?" Hawthorne exclaimed.

"Certainly," Francia declared. "A trifle like this will not hurt me. But I shall never forget that, but for you, I should now be a dead man. Lurking in the corner of the two walls the assassin was safe to make an end of me. I am under a heavy debt to you. So is all Paraguay. Sit down, Don Guillermo."

Hawthorne seated himself at the candle-loaded table. Francia drew up a chair. He rooted among the papers, found a small note-book, tore out a leaf, tried a quill, and scribbled something on it, held it over a candle until the ink was dry, and tossed it to Hawthorne.

"There!" he said. "Let that be the first instalment of my debt to you. I can refuse you nothing now, Don Guillermo. You wish to inspect my prisons; with that paper as a passport you will be shown over them as if you were myself in person."

Hawthorne began some expression of thanks.

"Never mind all that," Francia cut in on him. "Requite me by complete silence regarding this attempt on my life."

"If you must thank me, express your thanks by coming to see me often. And, by the by, consider yourself privileged to call upon me at any time between sunrise and sunset, even during my siesta hour. If you rouse me from my siesta I shall know you have something of importance to say which will not wait even an hour. I see you have excellent discretion."

When, a few moments later, Francia ushered him out of the main entrance facing the river, Hawthorne, as he heard

the bolts shot, bars put up and padlocks snapped behind him, was astonished to find no guard, sentinel, sentry or patrol anywhere in sight.

The nearly full moon had just reached that point in the sky where its rays began to light up the front of the Cathedral. Far before him the mean whitewash of the dumpy tower and squat façade was all fairy silver through the sluggish wisps of river mist, and the three openings of the porch yawned fascinatingly black under their arches and between their columns. When he turned the corner of the low building nearest the head of the thorn-grown gully that divided the Market Plaza from the Cathedral Plaza and saw along Calle Comercio he beheld the dwellers as they usually appeared about eleven o'clock of a hot night. Most of them were out on the continuous covered verandah which united the whole row of shop fronts into, as it were, one long, low building, more than three hundred yards from end to end, the break where narrow Calle Concepcion ended, at Calle Comercio and the square, not being noticeable in the moonlight, the pearly glimmer of which was diffused enough to render dimly visible the white-clad forms in the shadowy space under the verandah roof, into which their beds had, as was customary, been carried.

Some were already abed and snoring, as Hawthorne heard over his right shoulder; some sat on their rude cots, their bare feet swinging idly; some few were standing leaning against the pillars of the verandah-corridor or walking about. Some of the sitters yawned and stretched their arms, preparatory to lying down for the night. Many were smoking. A murmurous drone of low-voiced conversation, punctuated by a soft, musical Castilian laugh, whispered under the long portico.

Guitars sounded farther off and the music of one or more was in his ears all the way to the Mayorga Mansion.

(2)

Next morning at breakfast Hawthorne felt a difference in the social atmosphere. Old and young, men and women, stared at him as if he had been a portent dropped from the sky. All were polite and solicitous, but the effort to

make conversation was obvious and Don Vicente talked almost at random. At the earliest opportunity he led Hawthorne into the room in which they had first talked and there interrogated him.

He was manifestly more and more amazed.

"You are a magician, Don Guillermo!" he exclaimed. "A wizard! You have not only accomplished all you fore-shadowed, but more, and accomplished it at once! This is astounding. You must be exhausted after your prolonged exertion of all your faculties at such a tension. You need diversion, recreation. Let us go to Don Bernardo Velasco's and set off with him on a partridge hunt."

"I mean to enjoy a partridge hunt with Don Bernardo," Hawthorne replied. "But to-day it cannot be. I am going to the prison."

"Going to prison!" Don Vicente cried, the picture of consternation.

"No," Hawthorne laughed; "only going to inspect the prison."

"You are mad!" Don Vicente exclaimed. "If the Dictator heard of your so much as strolling about the neighbourhood of the prison, let alone loitering about it, not to speak of conning it, no power on earth could save your life. He would order you shot at once."

"The guards, for that matter, would shoot you without waiting for orders if they saw you so much as gazing at it from any near point of view."

"I should have explained," Hawthorne put in modestly, "that I have El Supremo's order to inspect all his prisons."

Every particle of colour left Don Vicente's face. The cigar fell from his lips and rolled down his waistcoat and dropped to the floor.

"I am not mad," Hawthorne assured him. "Here is the order. Read it."

Mayorga read it.

Read it twice.

"Don Guillermo," he said, "were we as we were twenty years ago you would be in danger of the Holy Office. You are more than a conjuror. You are a necromancer, a sorcerer. This is surely beyond the reach of any white magic. This is the effect of the black art! How did you obtain this? By what incantations?"

Hawthorne, of course, could not give any hint of his having saved Francia's life. He did not hesitate, but replied instantly:

"I am not sure whether the most potent charm was chess or eclipses."

"You must lose at chess very subtly," Mayorga remarked, "and compute eclipses very rapidly. And you mean to use this to-day?"

"Certainly," Hawthorne declared.

Don Vicente looked grave.

"This," he said, "will put you in a very delicate position. Lisardo told me, of course, of what passed at Jenofonte's yesterday afternoon. Rogelio's suspicions do him no credit, without question. But, if the rest hear of your being allowed to inspect the prisons and not only the public prison but the dungeons, more than half of them will begin to share Gamarra's doubts of you."

"That would be childish and absurd," Hawthorne declared. "I told them that one of my chief prospects of usefulness was that I might hope to acquire the privilege of entering the prison freely. I attain this object at once and you tell me it will make them suspicious of me. I think better of them than that."

Don Vicente sighed.

"I can only hope," he said, "that you will find your estimate in consonance with the facts. I can only repeat my warning and ask you to heed it."

"One of your warnings," Hawthorne said, "I shall heed. It occurs to me that the keeper of the prison might doubt the authenticity of this permit. You are so astonished that he might be even more so, might regard it as a forgery. So I shall go to the Government House first and ask for an escort to identify me to the Chief of the prison."

"That," said Don Vicente, "will make the men you met at Dr. Bargas' yesterday all the more likely to suspect you."

"If they are so foolish," Hawthorne said, "they are no confederates for me. The sooner I know that the better. Certainly I am going to the Government House before I go to the prison."

"In that case," Don Vicente said, "we have plenty of



time to call on Don Bernardo, who is an early riser, before you go to the Palacio."

"I am going now," Hawthorne said.

"At this hour!" Don Vicente said. "He permits no one to enter at this hour."

"He gave me a special invitation to see him at any hour and urged me to avail myself of the favour," Hawthorne said.

Mayorga looked really scared.

"The sentinel," he said, "will probably shoot you."

"I'll risk it," Hawthorne declared.

(3)

At the Government House Hawthorne, in fact, found a sentinel of quite a different type from the one who had been on guard the day before. He wore a similar uniform, but, instead of the comparative mildness of his brother-in-arms, exhibited a domineering ferocity, ordered Hawthorne off, apparently threatened to shoot him, manifestly understood no word of Spanish, and, when Hawthorne endeavoured to make himself intelligible with what little Guarani he knew, began to bawl as if for help.

Four barefoot soldiers and a gold-laced lieutenant responded to the call.

The sentinel gabbled some Guarani, the lieutenant gave an order in the same tongue, and in an instant Hawthorne was pinioned by two of the ruffians.

As he did not resist, he was not much mauled.

The lieutenant took away his hanger.

Then he was marched into the courtyard.

Francia was seated by his table, holding something in his lap, which he was apparently discussing with a workman who stood before him.

Two soldiers stood behind the workman and a lieutenant, whose back Hawthorne recognised as that of Zorilla, was close by.

When Hawthorne was about halfway across the *patio* Francia looked up.

He leapt to his feet, casting from him what he was holding, and uttered a short, sharp order in Guarani, explosive as a dog's bark.

Hawthorne's captors released him and sprang away from him as if he had been red hot.

The lieutenant hastily offered him his hanger. Hawthorne, shaking himself, composedly took the hanger and belt and buckled it about him.

"Rivarola!" Francia demanded. "What is this folly?"

"This man——" the lieutenant began.

"That gentleman!" Francia thundered at him.

"This gentleman, Excellency," Rivarola recommenced, "was mistaken by the sentry for a man acting suspiciously. The sentry called us, and I was bringing him before you."

"Rivarola!" said the Dictator severely, "you are an ass, as big an ass as the rest of your comrades."

Rivarola stood abashed, but plainly not scared.

"At least," the Dictator remarked drily, "you have the courage of your folly."

"Don Guillermo," he continued, "pray approach and be seated. No, do not wait for me to be seated; sit down while I stand."

"Rivarola!" he went on, "call all the guard, call all my household!"

They trooped into the courtyard, some thirty soldiers, four lieutenants in all, Bopî, the fat cook, a mulatto barber, and two negro boys.

"Don Guillermo," Francia said, "do me the favour to rise."

When Hawthorne was standing Francia addressed the soldiers.

"Look well at this gentleman. Look well enough to know him again. Look well enough not to mistake him for any one else or any one else for him. Attend well to what I am about to say, and you, Rivarola, Iturbe, Lopez and Zorilla, see to it that you tell your fellows."

"This is Señor Don Guillermo Atorno, *Americano del Norte*. He is to be admitted to me at any hour by day or by night. Any man who refuses him admission shall be shot, as shall any man admitting any one else by mistake for him."

"Now go, all of you!"

Hawthorne had been amusedly conning the expressions of the four lieutenants.

Zorilla's lean, hook-nosed brown face, all evil malice and malignant cruelty, showed puzzled amazement.

Iturbe's countenance of silly vanity, sallow and loose-lipped, betrayed an ill-concealed envy.

Rivarola's bluff, healthy stupidity was scarcely altered by a shade of chagrin.

Lopez, a flat-faced, bullet-headed, bull-necked young man, decidedly fat, remained entirely inscrutable.

As they started away, Francia called:

"Not you, Zorilla! Watch this bungler here, and bring him back when I call."

One of Zorilla's men picked up from the pavement the leather belt Francia had flung there.

When they were entirely alone and seated, Francia leaned toward Hawthorne and asked:

"Why did you come?"

"First of all," Hawthorne said, "to ask about my clumsy surgery, and your wound."

"I thought as much," Francia replied, "and that is why I sent them all away. Your dressing was effectual. The slash hurts me scarcely at all, thanks to the Guarani eye-lotion.

"That much for your first, and what is your secondly?"

"I reflected," Hawthorne said, "that your jailer might take me for a daring forger and that I might have trouble with so astonishing an order. So I came to request that you send some known official or officer with me."

"Not a bad idea!" Francia agreed. "If one of my Paraguayans had dared to suggest it, I suppose I should have flown into a passion with him. But from you it comes naturally. Which reminds me that we never came to the point of our conference last night. You must be very adroit at changing the subject."

"Excelentísimo Señor," Hawthorne smiled, "I really do not think I had anything to do with it. We left the track of our conversation on several side excursions. I may say we flew out of our orbit at a sharp tangent, more than once. But I think it was not my doing."

"Very likely," Francia agreed. "Put it down to my suspicious nature or to my want of perspicacity in dealing with so meteoric a stranger. At any rate, we must finish

that conference, and soon. We shall both need a long sleep to-night, before *Madrina Juana's fiesta*. We shall be sleepy all day Friday and shall sleep all Friday night. So come Saturday night, if you come no sooner.

"But if you can tear yourself away from the fascinations of Dr. Bargas, of his wine-shop and of the host of new friends you have met there, come Saturday afternoon, or even this afternoon after the siesta hour."

Hawthorne, noting the ironical tone of the Dictator in what he said of Bargas' wine-shop, and the emphasis on the words, 'host of friends,' was somewhat flustered internally, and merely bowed without any word.

"Good!" Francia smiled inscrutably. "I shall look for you. And now, before I send you off with an escort, you can decide a small matter for me."

"Zorilla!" he called. When the lieutenant appeared and saluted, he commanded:

"Bring that bungler back here."

The workman, his elbows gripped by the two soldiers, was speedily set before the Dictator, who enquired:

"Where is that belt?"

When it was handed him, he displayed it to Hawthorne.

"You, Don Guillermo," he said, "are a foreigner and impartial. I ask you to inspect this belt and to say whether you consider it well sewn."

Hawthorne took the belt, examined it with care, and replied:

"I know nothing of the methods of artisans at Asuncion. Each country has its own traditions, and its workmen inherit their limitations. But in my country I should call that a badly sewn belt."

"You have spoken most fairly," Francia said, "and most kindly endeavoured to excuse this rascal for what is no result of faulty training but merely the effect of carelessness and laziness."

Then he addressed the workman.

"*Bribon*, this belt is vile. This Señor says so."

"I care not what any man says, your Excellency," the man sullenly replied. "I have done my best for your Excellency. I can do no better."

Francia turned to Hawthorne.

"Behold, Don Guillermo," he said, "how it is in this

cal idler than I was of being kin to an unconscionable rake."

"You are like them," Hawthorne said, "in a way."

"That, even as you qualify it," Lopez laughed, "is a compliment. For Don Venancio is very handsome, and Narciso was almost terrifying he was so good-looking. There was something supernatural, as it were, about his good looks."

At that instant, as they were halfway across the open space beyond the bridge, and approaching the Dominican convent on their right between them and the river-bank, their attention was attracted by a dozen or more street boys who were yelling and dancing about in the space before the convent, tormenting a very big and very angry man.

He was so angry, had so completely lost his temper, that he was engaged in futile and hopeless efforts to catch one or the other of them, and whichever one he chased, his attention was continually distracted to one of the rest.

They were yelling:

"*Zapo! Zapo!*" at the top of their shrill voices, and circling about their victim, a bevy of barefoot, bareheaded little brown urchins, not one wearing anything more than a cotton shirt and cotton breeches.

Their butt was a huge mountain of a man, his bare feet in loose flapping slippers, his wide trousers supported by a red sash, wound very low about an enormous paunch which swagged and swayed under a vast expanse of dirty cotton shirt. The sleeves of the shirt were rolled up nearly to his armpits, its neck open to below his breast bone, displaying a great hairy chest and brawny, fleshy, sun-tanned arms, over one of which hung a gaudy, greasy jacket of cheap calico. Out of his red sash stuck the brass hilt of a sailor's knife. He wore no hat, but a greasy red Barcelona liberty-cap of knit silk was half drawn over his shock of black curls.

He was sweating profusely with his rage and exertions, bellowing and roaring at the boys, his face all beads of sweat, his curses prolonged by stammerings and stutterings, each oath ending in a choking growl.

The boys circled about, shrieking:

"Zapo! Zapo!"

At a word from Lopez they scampered off.

The obese giant puffed his thanks, still stuttering and stammering.

"Don Benigno," he said, in Spanish, with a very Biscayan accent, "those scoundrels ought to be shot."

"They certainly ought to be thrashed, Curro," Lopez replied. "But you ought not to give them the satisfaction of noticing them. And what are you doing so far from your yards?"

"I went over to Soloaga's," the Basque replied, "to borrow an adze. But the fool will send it to-morrow, *mañana* means never with Soloaga."

Lopez thereupon, as gravely as if he had been a Don Gregorio de la Cerda, presented the hulk as:

"Don Pancho Riquelme, Asuncion's chief ship-builder."

"Ch-ch-ch-armed to meet you, Señor Don Guillermo," the stuttering giant roared, crushing Hawthorne's outstretched hand in his huge paw.

He stood puffing; rummaged in the pocket of his pendant calico jacket; produced a tobacco pouch; performed the feat, very general in Asuncion, as Hawthorne afterwards learned, of rolling a cigarette with one hand; offered it in turn to Hawthorne and Lopez; on their both declining, stuck it in his mouth, took a tinder-box from another jacket-pocket, struck fire, and lighted his cigarette; returned the pouch and tinder-box to their places, and stutered:

"I must be off!"

He waddled off out of sight round the corner of the convent as they turned into Calle San Domingo.

"A character, Señor Don Benigno," Hawthorne remarked.

"You'll know him better, if you are long in Asuncion," Lopez replied. "His puffy shape and blotched and bloated surface have won for him the nickname of 'Toad' these ten years; but the name always makes him furious, though many people call him even 'Señor Zapo,' the nickname has so supplanted his own."

After they passed the first cross-street the whole west

side of Calle San Domingo was all one long low building, which, Hawthorne divined, could only be the prison.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PRISONS

THE prison, in fact, sprawled along the broad flat top of a low hill between the inlet and the upper part of Payaguá brook. It was nearly two hundred feet long, half very old, dating from Irala's time, half built by Espinosa to hold the overflow when his severities more than filled the older portion. It was all one low story, tile-roofed, with white-washed stone walls and heavily barred windows, about two feet wide and a yard high, set well up towards the projecting eaves of the red roof, so that their sills were all of ten feet from the street level.

Lopez spoke with the sentinel in Guarani. The fellow called another like himself, who shuffled off and returned with the Governor.

He, to Hawthorne's astonishment, was a handsome Castilian, with tiny feet, a trim figure, small, delicate hands, a graceful bearing and a face made up of features individually faultless and collectively producing an effect of refinement, self-respect and warm-hearted sympathy towards all mankind. He was as unlike as possible to anything one would imagine suiting his office. Also he was always smiling.

Lopez introduced him as Don Ruy Gomez, addressed him as "Don Ruy" and he Lopez as "Don Benigno." He was, as Hawthorne quickly discovered, not only Governor, but chief jailer and head turnkey.

He examined the permit with a sort of pleased interest, beamed congratulations, as it were, upon Hawthorne, and assured "Señor Don Guillermo" that all things under his charge were at his disposition.

Inside the prison the court was about thirty feet wide and nearly a hundred and fifty feet long, enclosed on one end and one side by a white-washed stone wall fully twenty feet high. At the other end was a tall, strong palisade of *quebracho*-wood stakes, set about four inches apart, spiked

to a cross-beam more than nine feet from the ground, and sharpened at their tops. On the fourth side of the court opened the seven doors of the seven prison rooms or common cells.

These Hawthorne minutely inspected one by one. The tie-beams of the low-pitched roof rested on the tops of the walls some fourteen feet from the floor. There was no ceiling, but the blackened, cobwebbed rafters and joists showed dingy and dusty as the rough scantlings and the chinky, cement-daubed crude tiles over the scantlings.

The walls, indeed, rose no higher than the tie-beams between the twenty-foot cells, so that there was a continuous air-space under the tiles. But this was little alleviation to wretches baked by day under a roof that sizzled beneath a cloudless sun, and suffocated at night when all the doors were shut fast.

The floors were mere tramped earth, every inch of it foul; the walls, greasy and rubbed to a glaze by contact of sweaty bodies, for some five feet from the floor, were streaked with the dried slime of many rains over their traces of old white-wash.

Each cell was crowded with some twenty or thirty hide cots and hung with ten or more hammocks stretched from hooks driven into the cement between the wall-stones.

The prisoners were all wearing shackles, consisting of a heavy ring riveted on each ankle, the two connected by two long bar links. Fettered thus, they sat or lay listlessly on the cots, all thin, pale and sallow, all dirty, all in rags, a pitiful hundred and fifty or more. Not one seemed to have any individuality or interested Hawthorne in the slightest degree.

More than half the prisoners were soldiers, low ruffians, privates who had reported for duty unfit for service, mostly from drunkenness, and had been ordered twenty to fifty lashes and two to six months in the prison as a punishment.

They showed their backs scarred or raw, according to the time that had elapsed since their offence. All were doggedly sullen, but not one but confessed that he was entirely at fault and the punishment just.

But in respect to the residue, Hawthorne mentally remarked that either conditions had changed amazingly since Beltran had left Paraguay, which seemed impossible, judg-



ing by the age of the prisoners, or Beltran had been speaking with some mental reservations, when he had said that no one ever stole anything in Asuncion. Here were petty thieves, to a certainty, among the loafers; gamblers and dram-house fighters. Hawthorne knew the types from varied experience of prisoners.

The inmates of the seven general cells one and all begged for tobacco. Hawthorne had none, and knew a pocketful of cigars would be worse than nothing. But in each cell he gave Gomez a silver dollar, the local *piastre* or *peso*, to spend in tobacco for the prisoners in that cell.

Gomez remarked:

"I'll make that last. One quarter of what that will buy will be all I'll give them at once."

In each cell a dozen or more voices chorused their thanks, adding:

"We're sure to get all that will buy us. Don Ruy is as good to us as he can manage."

When he had come out of the last cell he inspected the *patio*. In the courtyard, along the wall, were several crazy wattled huts thatched with palm-leaves; one fairly large, one medium-sized, and the rest tiny.

The large hut he found tenanted by five mulattoes, their skins a sort of lead-grey from confinement and idleness. The medium-sized hut held three negroes, one fairly fleshy, but all three ash-colour. The smaller huts each held one prisoner.

The first was plainly an ecclesiastic of some sort.

Hawthorne asked Gomez his name.

The handsome little Spaniard pursed his lips and looked doubtful.

"The order," he demurred, "instructs me to treat you in all respects as if you were El Supremo in person. Now, El Supremo has never on any occasion asked me to tell him the name of a prisoner."

"If El Supremo asked you to tell him the name of a prisoner," Hawthorne queried impatiently, "would you not obey him?"

"I should obey him, if he ordered me to tell the name of a prisoner, as I obey him in all things," Gomez hastened to assert; "but in this case he has ordered me to treat you as I should treat him, that can only mean to treat you as I

have always treated him. Now, he never at any time has asked me to tell the name of a prisoner. To tell you the name of a prisoner would be treating you as I have never treated El Supremo. Therefore, I dare not tell you the name of any prisoners. El Supremo might have me shot for going beyond the orders given me and acting presumptuously on my own responsibility."

Hawthorne turned questioningly to Lopez.

"He is quite right," Lopez declared. "He might certainly be running the risk of being shot, if he told you any prisoner's name. There is nothing about telling prisoners' names on the order. Only that he is to treat you as if El Supremo in person.

"But," Lopez added, after a pause, "you might ask the prisoner himself."

Gomez brightened at this.

"True," he exclaimed, "El Supremo has sometimes asked a prisoner his name."

Hawthorne at once entered the hut and introduced himself, saying:

"My name is Guillermo Atorno. I am from the *Estados Unidos del America del Norte*. By courtesy of the Dictator, as a foreigner, I am accorded permission to inspect his prisons. I desire, Father, to know your name."

"My son," said the friar, a short man much shrunken and fallen in but still fattish, "I am called Fray Dalmacio Taboada. At least, that was my name before I was brought here. Having lost all else, I do not know whether I have any longer a right even to my name."

After talking a short time with the sarcastic friar, Hawthorne bade him farewell and left him.

Gazing at the row of huts, he had an inspiration. He called sharply:

"Ramon Perez!"

From the third hut came a young man, in every lineament and outline the usual would-be-gentlemanly loafer of any or every Spanish-American town.

His manners, of course, were excellent. Hawthorne talked with him for some time, and then passed on.

The occupant of the hut next to Perez was manifestly by descent and nature what Perez aspired to be, one of those

gilded youths of the blooded aristocracy whose dress, manners and vices weaklings like Perez aped. He turned his head languidly as they entered the hut, and Hawthorne had a glimpse of his profile, which caused him to enquire, after introducing himself:

"Is your name Caballero, Señor?"

The youth was sulky but not reticent.

"My name," he said, "is Angel Marecos."

"Your mother was a Caballero?" Hawthorne hazarded.

"My grandmother was a Caballero," Don Angel replied.

"But my mother's name was Francia."

Hawthorne was startled and, to create a diversion, offered him a cigar, which he accepted, lit, and at once showed himself to be loquacious, even loose-tongued.

"I am not afraid of him," he said; "let him do his worst. My brother Francisco and I were volunteers the day after the pronunciamiento. Both of us were promoted in the course of the skirmishing while Don Atanacio was driving the Porteños southward. We returned to Asuncion lieutenants, and there were no more capable lieutenants in the army. After he was inaugurated Consul, we supposed our fortunes were made. We looked for captaincies, at least. But the old fool dismissed us both from the army the first week, saying that he would have no blood kin of his officers of his army, for fear they might presume on the relationship."

"We thought that a pretext. So did our friends, and called us 'heirs apparent' and '*infantes*.' We looked forward to a life of ease, consideration and influence; later, of power. We were rudely undeceived. Of course, everybody in Asuncion was most eager for our favour, quick to oblige us in any way, to fulfil, even to anticipate, our every wish."

"The band-master of the guards knew what windows I serenaded. He suggested to me that a picked quartette or sextette of his best musicians might be a pleasing variety after many nights of merely my voice and guitar. I agreed of course, jumped at the chance."

"The old fool heard of it; had me and the band-master arrested; confronted us with all the band; ferreted out the truth; had the six musicians given twenty lashes apiece and a month here in irons; the band-master got fifty lashes and

three months in prison. I got off without any lashes, but I have been here six months and may stay here for life for all I know."

The inmates of the remaining huts Hawthorne found Creoles of more or less gentlemanly appearance. Each he questioned, introducing himself as before.

The prisoner in the last hut was Don Cristobal de Maria, of whose indiscretion Mayorga had told Hawthorne. Don Cristobal was less pale and sallow than any one else in the prison, and was by no means thin. Hawthorne talked with him alone, for he peremptorily told Lopez and Gomez to withdraw to the other end of the court, which they did at once, Gomez remarking:

"El Supremo has many times given me that order when visiting his prison."

Don Cristobal was very much on his guard, but too entirely a Castilian gentleman to show either fear or suspicion. In word and tone he was perfectly frank and straightforward. Hawthorne assured him he would do what he could to procure his release. The poor Don was at this all in a tremble. Plainly he was cruelly torn by the dilemma as to whether Hawthorne was a tool of the Dictator, laying some trap for him, or a genuine friend, showing him a ray of hope.

Hawthorne's demeanour and his account of his past, of the state of Europe, of conditions at Buenos Aires and along the river, of his reception at Don Vicente's and by Dr. Bargas, won the old Don's confidence. He thawed, and his feelings carried him away in a sort of freshet of trustfulness, in which he forgot himself wholly, and volubly warned Hawthorne, in husky whispers, of the danger of any intervention in his behalf.

When he had won his confidence, Hawthorne asked:

"How long have you worn these fetters?"

"Only since yesterday," Don Cristobal replied; "when Don Alberta Chilaber escaped from this *cuartel* we were all threatened with *grillos*. Up to yesterday only those prisoners were shackled who are sometimes taken out to work on the streets. Yesterday Zorilla and some of his men came here, and most of them spent the entire day riveting shackles on all who were still unfettered."

Hawthorne spoke of having seen Chilaber with his cap-

tors. He talked some time with the old Don, and left him a little cheered.

Then he beckoned Gomez again and approached the stockade. He peered between the stakes of the palisade. He saw a portion of the courtyard, some thirty feet by twenty, a single door opening on it, and one hut built in the corner where the two outer walls met.

Across the entrance of the hut sprawled an old, white-wooled, toothless and very hideous negress, who had once been exceedingly obese, and was still grossly misshapen in a flaccid sort of way, as if her flesh had shrunken and left her skin incompletely filled.

In the doorway of the one cell lolled a soft-skinned girl of Galician appearance, her black hair tousled, her expression mingled of vacuous stupidity and shameless impudence, her red mouth hanging open, her *tupoi* pulled up well above her bent knees.

Against the wall of the court, on a hide cot, sat a pretty Guarani woman, looking like a well-to-do young matron. She was suckling a baby. Before her knelt a mulatto girl with a flat copper basin and a bit of cotton cloth with which she was bathing her feet.

"You wish also to inspect the women's quarters?" Gomez enquired.

"I do," Hawthorne replied.

"In that case," Gomez informed him, "you will enter alone. El Supremo always questions the women without any one accompanying him."

He jingled his huge keys, unlocked the three padlocks of the wicket, admitted Hawthorne to the enclosure, and snapped the padlocks behind him.

Hawthorne first entered the common cell, the girl making way for him with a sidling leer.

The cell was like those of the male prisoners, though less filthy. It contained but four hammocks and eight hide cots, so there was some room between. Its inmates were one negress, young and not repulsive of countenance; two mulattoes, apparently mother and daughter, and nine white women, mostly young.

The nine were all of one unmistakable class. The effrontery of their demeanour and the dirty indecency of their slatternly undress disgusted Hawthorne about equally.

Somehow he was still more revolted at the high filigree combs of gilt brass which two of them wore in their greasy black hair.

He went into the courtyard and approached the hut. The negress showed no disposition to make way for him, and snarled at him like an angry dog.

She spoke in Guarani, but he understood the few low, emphatic words.

"The lady is in there. Go away."

Gomez, from the other side of the palisade, must have been listening with all his ears, for he called through the bars to the negress, who sullenly moved aside and permitted Hawthorne to enter the hut. There was a hide cot opposite the door, and on it sat a tall girl bolt-upright, as if just startled awake.

Hawthorne forgot everything else.

She did not seem to him a Creole, or a Spaniard.

She looked English.

She was tall, her hair not quite golden hair but very nearly golden. Her skin was decidedly fair and, while she was pale, she was not in the least sallow, but a downright healthy pink. Her eyes were a bright, clear blue, her nose straight and thin, her little ears set high up and far back. She was almost a beauty, very lovely to look at, and very girlish.

She wore a plain cotton *tupoi*. Her white stockings and low black slippers were very visible, as the *tupoi* was too short for her.

In fact, she was, when Hawthorne's eyes fell on her, in the act of trying to pull her gown so as to hide her very well-turned ankles.

She blushed the first blush of shame or embarrassment Hawthorne had seen on any woman at Asuncion.

He stood petrified with admiration, astonishment and sympathy.

"Do you speak English?" he blurted out in English.

His eyes were on her face, and he saw a change of expression. But the alteration, if any there were, was too slight for him to be certain of it.

She stood up, very straight.

"The Señor," she said, in exceedingly correct Spanish, but in Spanish with an intonation neither Castilian, Gali-

cian, Catalan, Andalusian, Murcian nor Granadan, "speaks a language I do not understand."

"I beg your pardon," Hawthorne spoke in Spanish. "What is your name?"

"My name?" she echoed. "Señor, I am not sure I am allowed to tell you my name. So many things are forbidden one in this Paraguay that it is not safe to assume anything permitted. It is best, I have found, to consider all things forbidden, except those expressly authorized. I have not been expressly permitted to tell you my name."

"Am I to address you as Señora or Señorita?" Hawthorne queried.

"That also," the girl replied, "is one of the countless things which have not been permitted me to tell. I feel I have too little covering for my ankles, but I have no desire to have them hidden by *grillos*. They have riveted *grillos* on all the men. Perhaps we women will wear them also, if we are not careful."

She stood gazing steadily at Hawthorne. She was tall, tall as a man; so tall that there was little space between her fair hair and the crazy roof of the hut.

No light entered except by the door and the chinks, yet so violent was the glare of the daylight outside that she was, as it were, haloed in radiance. Hawthorne felt as if he were in some vast shrine before the deity for whom it was builded. He felt small and humble before her, yet blest in her presence. The thought of this radiant lady housed in a foul hut, herded with the trulls he had recoiled from in the vile cell, shot Hawthorne through with solicitude.

He spoke earnestly:

"I have the good fortune to be much favoured by El Supremo. My word has weight with him. I believe I could influence him to release you from this horrible prison. Surely you cannot wish to remain here. But I can hardly hope to do anything to assist you, though I am most willing to be of service to you, unless I know your name. You may trust me. Tell me your story and let me try to help you."

The girl gazed at him as steadily as before. Her expression did not alter, and when she spoke her tone was even. But her words were sarcastic.

"Señor," she said, "you are much blest to stand high in favour with El Supremo. Surely, all his friends are to be trusted, and I should tell you my story at once, all my story, keeping back nothing, since you are his friend and tell me so. But I am not at all sure that it is permitted me to tell all my story to the first stranger who asks it, even if he gives himself out as a friend of El Supremo's, and must be somewhat of what he claims, since he enters here fed, clothed and washed and shows on his face full confidence that he may pass out again whenever he wishes; I am by no means sure that it is permitted nor am I sure it would be wise. Even if you are all you pretend, other ears might hear. Ears of those less friendly than you claim to be. I do not admit that I have any story to tell or any name to disclose to you. I admit nothing, as to myself, not even that I wish to escape from this prison, which you justly call horrible. I know it is horrible, but there are worse prisons in Paraguay, there are also gibbets and *banquillos* and graves. And there are worse things in Paraguay than the worst of those. I am very well off where I am, compared with the worst that might befall me elsewhere."

Hawthorne met her steady gaze with a gaze as steady.

"Señora or Señorita," he said, "whichever I should call you, you distrust me; but you shall trust me before long and thank me from your heart before I am done with you. Many motives brought me to Paraguay, chief among them that I hoped to make my fortune here. But as I sailed up the river or fretted during our endless waits, I reflected upon my motives, and it seemed to me that I was drawn to Asuncion by some instinct stronger than any reason, by an irresistible attraction. I have found out why I came to Asuncion. It was that I might serve you, rescue you from this prison and give you all the desires of your heart. I go now, to begin whatever must be done to bring about your release and to ensure your welfare. I shall not ask you to trust me until you cannot help but trust me. Meanwhile, whether you believe it or not, you have at least one friend in Asuncion."

The girl's gaze was as steady as before.

She gave him an ironical little bow and curtsy.

"One should be glad anywhere on earth," she said, "to



hear any living creature declare himself amicable; especially when one knows of no other human being whom one might claim as friend. Yet I am not glad. You say I shall yet trust you. I doubt it, Señor. If I am ever glad, here in Asuncion, to hear any friend of El Supremo, any one high in his favour, call himself my friend, I shall be greatly astonished.

"But I am glad of one thing you say. You say you are about to go. That, Señor, makes me glad. I have no home, Señor. But this is my abode. You imply that you are far from your home. But you must have some abode in Asuncion, Señor, some dwelling at which the favours of El Supremo will know where to find you. Will you not now go to that abode, Señor, and leave me in undisturbed possession of mine, such as it is?"

Hawthorne, choking, bowed and withdrew from the hut.

At sight of his face Gomez made haste to unlock and unbar the wicket.

"You have spent all the time you desire in the women's prison, Señor?" he queried.

"All," Hawthorne replied. "And all I wish to spend in the men's prison."

Yet he delayed long enough to enquire of Gomez as to the feeding of the prisoners, and was told that they were supplied with all the *maté* they could drink, with oranges, as many as they could eat, with *chipá* in abundance, and with stews at noon, except on Fridays and fast days, when they were given boiled fish, generally *barbudo*, which is cat-fish.

Outside, he made the circuit of the prison, and observed the sentry-boxes on the other side of the *patio* wall, the sentry-path along it, and the pacing Guarani sentries.

Lopez, watching his face, knew precisely when to enquire:

"What orders, Señor Don Guillermo?"

"To all the other prisons," Hawthorne answered. "Beginning with the nearest."

"There are only the dungeons," Lopez replied.

As they walked along, Hawthorne enquired how so gentlemanly a being as Gomez came to be keeper of the prison. Lopez explained that he had killed his own brother in a quarrel over a game of cards, had been sentenced to be hanged, but had been pardoned on condition of serving as

jailer, the pardon amounting to an indeterminate reprieve during good behaviour and a death sentence if he attempted to escape.

They retraced their steps along the way by which they had come, repassed the Dominican Monastery and recrossed the Jesuits' bridge.

Bounding the Plaza on the side next the river bank were two low tile-roofed buildings. The nearest, just opposite that corner of the Palacio which was formed by the old Jesuit church, the corner round which the assassin in woman's garb had fled the night before, was an adobe structure where the infantry detail for the day sheltered between reliefs. The other, an L-shaped stone building dating from Irala's time, the guard-house of all the Intendentes from Mendoza to Larrazabal, was now appropriated to the lancers exclusively. This faced the Cabildo and had two adobe structures used as stables to the south-east of it, the second encroaching on the Plaza and, as it were, dividing the flatter portion near the Palacio and Cabildo from the rougher and more uneven expanse nearer the Cathedral and Calle Comercio.

In the Infantry Guard-House Hawthorne found the officer of the day, a swarthy brute whom Lopez presented as Don Lerdo Martinez. He bowed low over the magic permit, and led the way to an extremely dirty cell similar to those of the public prison, but smaller. It was untenanted, and contained no hammocks, only eight hide cots.

This, Hawthorne learned, was the place to which Don Basilio Goyez had been consigned for his night of meditation and fasting.

Next, Captain Martinez unlocked a heavily barred door and led the way down a narrow, dark stair, the air on which, if it could be called air, was so foul an effluvium that going down it was like descending into a cess-pool. A glimmer of light on the left at the foot of the slimy steps proved to come the length of a vaulted passage over forty feet long, from a single window, less than a yard square and heavily barred, set just under the vault at the end towards the river. On the narrow passage, five on each side, opened the doors of ten cells. One by one Martinez unlocked those on their left. They were all alike, about seven feet square, built of solid stone, the vaulted ceiling so low

that Hawthorne could barely stand erect under the very crown of the flattened vault. There was no opening to any save its doorway, through which must come, from the one window at the end of the passage, whatever light and air might find its way to the prisoner within.

Hawthorne entered every one and was glad to find the first two empty, save for a worn hide-cot in each.

In the third he found a smallish man, with shapely, aristocratic hands and feet, and very black eyes. His hair and beard also were very black and, somehow, even in their tangled unkemptness, produced the impression, at first glance, that in his normal condition he had been an extremely dapper and foppish person. Even in his filth and rags, with *grillos* on his ankles, he was plainly a gentleman.

Hawthorne introduced himself as he had in the public prison, and learned that he was talking to Don Rodrigo Valta, who seemed entirely unreserved until asked why he was in prison. Then he answered curtly:

"Perhaps the tyrant might tell you: he has given me no intimation!"

In the next cell was a young man, plainly a full-blooded Guarani. He was more ragged and filthy than Valta, and his ankles were horrible with sores and ulcers under the shackles. Yet he stood up as politely as if he had been a well man and free.

When Hawthorne enquired the reason of his confinement, he replied:

"I have said, Señor Don Guillermo, that my name is Felicien Abendano. That should tell you why I am here."

The remaining cell on that side was vacant.

Below the window Hawthorne paused, hoping for a breath of the outer air. He hardly caught a whiff but, as he peered out between the close bars, saw pass and repass the cotton-trouserred legs of a sentry.

In the third cell of the opposite range was a young man similar to Abendano, but plainly less a gentleman and more a peasant; also less weak and shattered by confinement. His gentlemanly bearing was marred by something of a beggar's cringe and more of an ill-assumed pose of conscious martyrdom.

When asked why he was in prison, he replied, like Abendano:

"Señor Don Guillermo, you have heard that I am Bernardino Zapidas. That tells my whole story."

The remaining cells were untenanted. Hawthorne entered each and glanced about it. In the last cell Lopez remarked:

"This is where the lady was found."

"What lady?" Hawthorne queried sharply.

"The lady in the hut in the prison," Lopez explained.

"Found?" Hawthorne cried. "What do you mean by 'found'?"

Even in that dim light, Hawthorne could see every vestige of healthy colour fly from the lieutenant's face and leave it grey with terror.

"I supposed . . . I imagined . . . I fancied . . ." he babbled, "that El Supremo . . . that the lady . . . I assumed that you knew; I have told you something. If you reveal my indiscretion to El Supremo, I am a dead man."

"Do not be afraid," Hawthorne assured him. "I shall tell nobody anything."

Martinez, with manifest relief, bade them an effusive adieu as they left the building.

At the Cavalry Guard-House Hawthorne found a handsome, natty captain, by name Don Fulano Garmendia. He showed an untenanted cell like that shown by Martinez, and two ranges of dungeons underground. If anything, they were worse than the first Hawthorne had seen.

Of the twenty cells, eleven were tenanted by gaunt scarecrows, emaciated, sallow, with sunken eyes, matted hair, straggling beards and long nails. Every one wore *grillos* on his ankles. The least repulsive and least pitiful of these prisoners was the recaptured Chilaber. He lay on his cot, plainly tormented by a raging fever. He was obviously too ill to stand up, and could barely speak.

Besides the two Chilabers, no prisoner interested Hawthorne except the last.

At sight of him, he greeted him as Don Francisco.

"How did you know me?" the young man asked, in a courteous tone, but with a sort of affected aristocratic languor, oddly absurd in his condition and situation.

"I recognised you," Hawthorne said, "after talking to your brother in the public prison."

"Is he in prison, too!" Don Francisco exclaimed. "He is luckier than I: he has light, air and company. I am like a buried corpse for all the news I hear."

"So that old Demon rounded on him, too! What for? If I may ask, Señor Don Guillermo."

Hawthorne told him.

"Just like him!" Don Francisco commented.

"He prates of impartiality, reiterates that he will treat all men alike, will favour no one, and, in fact, is so in dread of favouring his relatives that he is actually a savage to all his blood kin."

"I had a quarrel at a dance, and, as I was insulted, naturally struck the intruder."

"Now, the same thing in anybody else would have passed absolutely unnoticed."

"He had me arrested, rated me for presuming on my relationship to him, told me he'd teach me to lord it over Paraguay, said he'd show all the world that he had no favourites, would deter any others from such folly."

"Thereupon he threw me into this hole. Two or three months ago they riveted these *grillos* on me. Here I am."

## CHAPTER XV

### DOÑA CECILIA

#### (1)

RETURNED to the Mayorga mansion, Hawthorne was glad to find Don Vicente in his "library." Over *maté* and cigars he described his morning and, in particular, the lady of the hut.

"Without question," Don Vicente declared, "you refer to Doña Cecilia Rodríguez, the wife or widow of that Don Domingo Rodríguez of whom Don Bernardo Velasco told you yesterday morning."

"Wife or widow?" Hawthorne queried.

Don Vicente put up one plump, white hand.

"Don Guillermo," he protested, "you go too fast, you *Americanos del Norte*. Your quick minds outrun our slow wits, our slower tongues. Only hearken, I will tell you everything. When I am at the end of my story, you will know all. Question me then, if necessary."

Hawthorne, rebuked, composed himself to listen.

"Don Domingo Rodriguez," Mayorga resumed, "was an important figure in Asuncion throughout the last months of Don Bernardo Velasco's rule. During the alarm caused by Belgrano's invasion, he was one of our Intendente's most valued councillors, for, while grasping and unscrupulous in his private dealings, he possessed great capacities for public business. He was resolute for defence against the Porteños, upheld Don Bernardo in all things, and, when the invaders drew near the capital, superintended the audit of all expenditures for arms, ammunition, saddles, belts, and other supplies for the patriot army; verified and checked the lists of munitions in the arsenals, oversaw the dealing out of muskets, flints, powder and bullets to the defenders, and rendered invaluable services.

"When Don Porfirio Somellera, whom you met at the wine-shop of Dr. Bargas, fomented ideas of independence here in Asuncion, Don Domingo mediated between the revolutionists and the Intendente. It was his influence with Don Jerman Caballero which arranged for Don Bernardo's resignation and acquiescence in the formation of a local independent Government and for his peaceable withdrawal from the Government House into private life. Don Domingo was active in the discussions which preceded the formation of a *junta* to take charge of the government until a convention could be summoned. Along with Don Prudencio la Guardia, and Don Cipriano Doméque, he maintained whatever influence the merchants and landowners of Asuncion possessed over against the greater power of the generals of the army, and voiced the sentiments of those citizens who were neither churchmen, lawyers nor soldiers. The three of them held out for the appointment of Don Eustaquio Baiz as secretary of the *junta*. But the generals overruled this proposal on the ground, not only of Don Eustaquio's inferiority in erudition to the only alternative candidate, but still more because, being son-in-law of Don Lazaro Ribera de Espinosa, the previous Intendente, he

shared to some extent the obloquy cast upon his father-in-law and to a greater degree his unpopularity.

"When our present Dictator was appointed secretary to the *junta*, Don Domingo, who had opposed him by every possible means, felt himself unsafe in Asuncion, regarding his cousin as his enemy ever since his suit against Don Estanislao Machain, and still more so since his recent opposition to his appointment.

"His three children had all died within a few weeks of each other, and his wife only some months later, just before the news of the French invasion of Spain had reached Paraguay. Being thus a childless widower, Don Domingo turned as much as possible of his large property into cash, closed up his house here in Asuncion, and secretly departed out of Paraguay, reaching Buenos Aires in safety, as we heard from the captain of the vessel in which he sailed down the river from Corrientes.

"At Buenos Aires he engaged in commerce, prospered greatly, and married for the second time. This we heard through Don Meliton Isasi, or through one of his ship-captains. We also learned that his second wife had been a Señorita Cecilia Balcarce, daughter of Don Preciado Balcarce of Buenos Aires, and of his first wife, whom he had married in England and who had died while her only daughter was an infant. We likewise heard that Señorita Cecilia had been unhappy with her step-mother, Doña Melchora Balcarce, who had been Señorita Melchora Escalada, and that therefore Domingo's wooing of his second wife had been quick and easy, as he was wealthy and her father eager that the daughter of his first wife should be married.

"However that may have been, whether the gossip was true or not, we heard that Don Domingo was again married, that Doña Cecilia was tall, fair-haired and blue-eyed, like an English woman, or like Doña Encarnacion Figueredo, the only *rubia* in Asuncion.

"Later we heard that Don Domingo had removed with his new wife to Santa Fé, and was there prospering and growing richer.

"A year or more later we heard that he had removed from Santa Fé to Corrientes, and that, being in favour with Artigas and regarded as under his protection, he continued

to prosper and grow rich in Corrientes, like the Chilabers, whom you saw this morning in their dungeons.

“Late one very hot night last March—that is, about four months ago, and about two months after the ship carrying the Chilabers anchored in the harbour here—it was rumoured about Asuncion that Don Domingo Rodriguez, with his Porteño wife and a numerous retinue of servants, had arrived in the city just after dark, having travelled from Corrientes by land, crossing the river at Itaty, and making the journey through the marsh country by way of Curapaiti, Neembucú and Herradura.

“We regarded the rumour as very improbable, for we could not conjecture any sane motives that would lead him to return to Asuncion. Besides, not one of us gentry had seen any indications of the entrance into Asuncion of such a cavalcade. True, we had noticed that Don Domingo’s mansion had been opened, aired and cleaned. But the caretaker had maintained that his orders said nothing about his master returning to Asuncion; that he did not know why the house was to be made ready for occupation. It was too late that night to go to Don Domingo’s house and discover the truth. So no one went.

“Next morning we were startled by a report that before sunrise a body of soldiers had surrounded the Rodriguez mansion, arrested him and cast him into one of the underground cells of the infantry guard-house. The news, of course, was passed about in whispers. No one dared to ask any questions, or so much as to stare at Don Domingo’s house, far less to call there, even in secret.

“No one in Asuncion had ever seen his Porteño wife. But when we saw a tall, fair woman, much indeed like Doña Encarnacion Figueredo, crossing the Plaza and entering the Government House, we conjectured that she was Doña Cecilia going to intercede for her husband.

“Her intercessions were not without avail. He was not released, but we heard that she had permission to visit him daily, and indeed saw her pass and repass through the streets each morning, followed by a slave girl with a basket, as if of food or delicacies.

“No one, of course, dared so much as to notice her, let alone speak to her, for fear of drawing down the Dictator’s displeasure upon any one who seemed to favour a



wife of one of his prisoners. Still less did any one dare to call at her house or offer her assistance of any kind. That would have been almost equivalent to suicide. All felt curiosity and sympathy, but all dreaded to show either. To help or comfort her in her distress, even secretly, would have been too appalling a risk. Therefore, with her few servants, for the retinue had dwindled or had been exaggerated, she lived isolated in her closed and barred house, as much a stranger to all of us as if she had never come to Asuncion. No one knew any more of its tenants or of what went on in its *patio* than if no such house existed.

"Last April, a day or two after Don Alberto Chilaber's escape from the public prison, we heard that Don Domingo had likewise escaped from the *cuartel* where he had been confined, a far more difficult matter. His wife had exchanged garments with him; dressed in hers he had successfully passed the guards, as a tall woman muffled to the eyes was what they had seen enter and leave daily for weeks.

"His devoted wife was found in his cell wearing his clothing.

"At once his house was routed out, and his servants arrested and tortured. But all denied any knowledge of his escape, of any plans for his escape, or of knowing anything except that their mistress had left the house at the usual hour that morning, with no attendant, herself carrying the basket of food, as she had sometimes done before.

"The lieutenant of the guard on duty when the escape occurred was shot, of course. So were two or three sentries.

"The whole city, the whole country all about, was searched for any trace of the fugitive. None has been found. He may have escaped out of Paraguay, may be hiding, though that is very improbable, or may, more likely, be dead of fatigue, exposure or despair. That is why I spoke of Doña Cecilia as his wife or widow.

"She was left in the barrack cell for a few days only. She was then removed to the public prison, where you saw her.

"Don Domingo's entire property was at once confiscated and advertised for sale. His house was bought by Don

Gumesindo Estagarribia, a rich Creole whom the Dictator has created Secretary of State.

"And now," he concluded, "you know all I can tell you of this lady."

"Has no human being," Hawthorne queried, "no lady of her class, visited her in her imprisonment?"

"My dear young friend," Mayorga exclaimed, "can nothing make you understand that to show the slightest concern for any one under the Dictator's displeasure, even if not arrested, would draw down upon whoever exhibited such a feeling still more severe displeasure; that to manifest interest in the welfare of one of his prisoners would almost certainly cause any one rash enough for such temerity to suffer even more rigorous punishment?"

"Surely," Hawthorne maintained, "the relations of prisoners are permitted to succour them. Doña Cecilia was allowed to visit her husband."

"True," Don Vicente replied. "But Doña Cecilia has no relatives in Asuncion. Her husband's kinsfolk do not know her, and are all on very bad terms with the Dictator. Not one of them took any more notice of Don Domingo's presence in Asuncion than if he had never returned, not even his two brothers. They are glad enough to be out of the prison themselves, glad enough to remain unnoticed by the Dictator. They are not so foolish as to bring themselves to his attention or recall themselves to his memory. They avoid reminding him of their existence."

"If," Hawthorne persisted, "none of her husband's relations nor any pious ladies dare try to alleviate her sufferings in prison, surely the nuns would run no risk by ministering to her."

"Nuns!" Don Vicente cried. "There are no nuns in Asuncion. There never have been."

"Why is that?" Hawthorne enquired, astonished.

Don Vicente smiled.

"The atmosphere of Asuncion," he said, "is scarcely favourable to the establishment of a nunnery here. Our clergy have never been a cause of pride to the residents of our capital. I can scarcely imagine any community tolerating nuns comparable to our friars, or any nuns worthy to be called nuns existing in the same city with such friars as we have here; or, for that matter, of any bishop author-

izing the experiment. The climate of Asuncion is more congenial for a crop of gold combs than for veils."

Hawthorne contracted his eyebrows.

"If none exist to help her," he said, "I must try to help her myself."

"You will draw down on you the wrath of our Dictator, for certain," Don Vicente warned him.

"I think not," Hawthorne spoke drily. "I shall be very cautious. This is no case for rescue, for haste, for urgency. I must watch and wait and plan.

"But let me ask you this:

"Suppose I had El Supremo's written authorisation for some lady to go with me to the prison, talk with Doña Cecilia, assist her with fresh clothing and whatever else she needs, should I find any willing?"

"Any?" Mayorga cried. "You would find all willing, all eager. Not one but would compete for the privilege."

"Thank you," Hawthorne uttered fervently. "As soon as I can, I shall have such a permission as easily as I won that for myself."

(2)

At the Palacio Hawthorne was conducted at once by Bopí to the Dictator in his library, the fittings of which he found rearranged according to his suggestions of the night before. Francia was again wearing his flowered calico dressing-gown, instead of the blue general's-coat of his morning audiences. As soon as they were left alone, after both had partaken of Francia's coarse, cheap snuff and their cigars were drawing, the Dictator said:

"One of the bits of wisdom imparted to me by Don Tomas Parlett is the advice that no man should ever dress his own hurts unless he can get no one else to do so for him. Would you think it wise to put a new dressing in place of the one you put on me last night?"

"Does it pain you?" Hawthorne queried.

"Not a particle," Francia declared.

"Is the dressing stuck to the wound?" Hawthorne asked.

"No," the Dictator said, moving his shoulders about, "I think not."

"Then we had best leave it as it is," Hawthorne advised.

"I'll merely soak the pad with your Guarani eye-lotion."

After they were again seated, Francia came straight to the point.

"In the fewest words, Don Guillermo," he said, "how do you mean to make your profits on your proposed extension and improvement of our *yerba* trade, and what proportions of the profits do you expect for yourself?"

Hawthorne's reply was prompt and unhesitating.

"I am told," he said, "that the export of *yerba* has been practically uniform for more than thirty years, that there have been scarcely any fluctuations since before Espinosa's time."

"That is true," Francia acknowledged.

"Any augmentation of the traffic," Hawthorne continued, "would therefore be immediately apparent, and what proportion of that enlargement was due to my activities would be easily ascertained. I had a vague notion of proposing to you that I be allowed one-half of the net profits on each year's increase over the previous year's exportation: no growth, no profit to me whatever."

"That certainly sounds modest and fair," Francia ruminated. "I should be willing to think that over."

"I had another idea," Hawthorne pursued. "I am told that not a pound of *yerba* is exported beyond this continent. As I told you, I have hopes of creating a demand for it throughout the entire civilised world. It seems to me that, say half the net profits on all *yerba* sold outside of South America, might be only a fair return to me for finding new markets for it, and that this might reasonably continue for my lifetime."

"I should have to consider that proposal for some time and very carefully," Francia said, "before entering upon a binding agreement to that effect. But there is nothing manifestly unfair in the suggestion."

"I had thought," Hawthorne continued, "that perhaps a compromise between the two proposals, or a combination of them, might prove acceptable to the government of Paraguay."

"I shall think the matter over," Francia said. "Meanwhile, what facilities do you desire towards acquainting yourself with the intricacies of the *yerba* trade?"

Hawthorne replied: "Merely freedom to become ac-

quainted with Asuncion, its inhabitants and its environs, to walk and ride about as I please, to observe the city and its suburbs and surroundings. After I feel at home here, I shall request permission to extend my enquiries."

"All of which permission," the Dictator said, "is freely granted. But I do not perceive any probabilities of immediate profit to yourself in such excursions."

"Immediate profit," Hawthorne replied, "I do not look for. I am well enough provided to support myself for a long time in the hope of ultimate large returns for my outlay. I am told that each year there are shipped from Asuncion about forty thousand *tercios* of *maté*, running from nine to ten *arrobas* in weight to each *tercio*. That makes from nine to ten million pounds of *yerba*. As it is valued at the quay at about two *piastres* the *arroba*, that comes to, at least, seven hundred and twenty thousand dollars' worth of *maté*, and perhaps a round eight hundred thousand dollars' worth. Putting the export at the lowest estimate, as the profits run fully fifty per cent, the annual net profit is fully three hundred and sixty thousand dollars. Reckoning the present export at its highest, if I can increase the traffic by only so much as ten per cent yearly, the first year would show fifty thousand *piastres* net increment in profits. Half of that would be a small fortune to me; and I hope for not ten per cent increases, but doublings or treblings of the traffic. Tea and coffee are consumed in Europe by millions of pounds; wherever they are used there should be a quick market for *yerba* as soon as it is introduced."

"Ah!" Francia exclaimed. "You streak the sky with sunrise clouds of golden dreams, yet I would wager that all the time you are talking *yerba* to me you are really bursting to lecture me on how I should manage my prisons."

"I assure you, Excelentísimo Señor," Hawthorne exclaimed, "that I had no such intention."

"Why not?" Francia demanded. "I certainly expected it as a sequel to some of your utterances of last night."

"Last night," Hawthorne rejoined, "I suggested most innocently that in circumstances dependent upon a whole complex of contingencies and eventualities, you might allow me to inspect your prisons. Your quick and unexpected

suspicious, as if I had made a proposal to view your prisons at once, roused in me a combative spirit of contradiction and stubborn opposition.

"To-day I have, so Don Benigno told me when we parted, inspected every part of each of your prisons. I realise how outrageously presumptuous it would be for me to make any suggestions. I know nothing of the past conditions which made the prisons what they are or of the present conditions which keep them such, nor of the reasons which consigned to them each of the prisoners I saw. Were I to offer suggestions, I should hold you quite justified in having me shot as a fool and a meddler."

Francia's brows knit suddenly. He threw his cigar on the floor and lit a fresh one at the candle which projected from the jumble of papers on the table.

"You are altogether too plausible, Don Guillermo," he said. "I half believe I ought to have you shot on general principles. But then I never have had anybody shot on general principles and do not intend to begin with you, nor to begin ever with anybody, for that matter. I should certainly rebuke any Paraguayan who offered a suggestion about anything, should very likely imprison him; might, if goaded to it, order him shot. For all Paraguayans are fools and their suggestions ridiculous. And, apart from that, I must impress on all of them, and the old Spaniards in particular, that a Dictator's business is to dictate, not to be dictated to.

"You are different. You have sense. Your ideas are practical. You are no native here, no subject of mine. Your suggestions are welcome.

"As to shooting you, I did not think of it last night. But to-day and any future days, I do not forget and shall not forget that but for your quickness and strength of wrist I should not be able to give any orders about anything. I am no more likely to have you shot for presumption than for familiarity. Have you noticed that from the time we sat down to supper last night until just now you never once said 'Excelentísimo Señor' to me? I had not until you said it to me just now. Familiarity from you comes naturally. We are friends already, Don Guillermo. I invite your comments upon my prisons, your criticisms, your suggestions."

Hawthorne gulped a dry, empty swallow, and spoke slowly, his eyes keen on Francia's.

"You do not seem to be laying a trap for me," he said.

"I am not," Francia reassured him.

"Relying on that assurance," Hawthorne resumed, "I venture one suggestion: That you release one of your prisoners."

"I can guess which," Francia smiled. "You mean the lady confined among the women in the general prison."

"The same," Hawthorne affirmed, his lips drier.

"That is like a young man," Francia declared, still smiling, "to intercede for my comeliest prisoner. Nor do I wonder. I make the same suggestion to myself every day. There is not one of my prisoners whom I should be more willing to release. But I cannot entertain your suggestion, even if it had any other basis besides a young man's soft-heartedness for any pretty face. The lady in question is the core of the most baffling puzzle I have had to deal with since I attained authority; of the one insoluble riddle of my present perplexities. Also, she is the only clue, if clue there be, to one or perhaps even to more than one, of my most dangerous enemies. Until I have them in my power or am sure that they have ceased to exist, I must, however unwillingly, retain her in duress."

"But surely," Hawthorne burst out, "she has done nothing to deserve imprisonment!"

Instantly Francia's manner changed. His mild demeanour vanished, his face hardened. He was all the imperious despot, infuriated at a trace of opposition.

"What she deserves is too small a factor to be considered," he snarled. "The question is of my duty to the safety of Paraguay embodied in myself!"

Hawthorne sat silent, sweating in the hot afternoon air.

After glaring at him for a long minute, Francia softened again.

"Let us change the subject," he said. "Let us make no further reference to that individual. Let us pass to other suggestions which occur to you."

"With your permission," Hawthorne replied stiffly, "I must ask the privilege of a postponement of my suggestions until I learn more of Asuncion and of Paraguay."

"Very judicious!" Francia admitted. "But you do not need any postponements to ask questions."

"To ask questions," Hawthorne said, "would not be judicious after any amount of postponement."

"Yet I am sure," Francia came back at him, "that you are very curious about several of the prisoners besides the lady."

"However curious I might be," Hawthorne disclaimed, "I feel that to express that curiosity would be an unpardonable impertinence."

"From any one but yourself, certainly," the Dictator agreed; "perhaps even from you. I shall save you the risk. To Paraguayans I never explain myself, far less stoop to justify myself. To you I am about to do both. Put it down to whim or caprice, if you choose."

"Pai Dalmacio no doubt put on an air of injured innocence, pulled a long face, hit the most moving key of his best whine, and let you suppose him a helpless victim, confined in fetters because he had preached loyalty to his king and resistance to traitors before and on the famous 29th of September. He always poses as a martyr to his preaching towards the abortive counter-revolution."

"He whined," Hawthorne interrupted absent-mindedly, "but he gave no reasons why he was in prison."

"You had been given to understand by others," Francia insisted, "that he suffered for his part in that futile attempt."

"Yes," Hawthorne truthfully admitted.

"Well," Francia resumed, "he is in prison for no such reason."

Then his expression suddenly hardened.

"Did you meet Don Nicolas Herrera in Buenos Aires?" he demanded.

"Yes," Hawthorne replied; "a most agreeable gentleman, of whom I saw more than a little."

"Humph!" ejaculated Francia. "That most agreeable gentleman was despatched about three years ago to Asuncion, ostensibly to conclude a treaty of alliance between Buenos Aires and the Republic of Paraguay. Everybody here understood perfectly that his real mission was to bring about, by cajolery, bribery, threats or any other means in his power, the reduction of Paraguay from an independent



republic to the status of a mere appanage of Buenos Aires, of a province like Entre Rios or Mendoza

"The report of his approach caused more trepidation than had the news of Belgrano's invasion three years before. His wiles were more shuddered at than Belgrano's guns and sabres. Everybody feared he would succeed. The old Spaniards foresaw that union with Buenos Aires would make forever impossible reunion with Spain; merchants and traders foreboded the extinction of their opportunities for profit under Porteño domination or competition; the patriot revolutionists beheld the gallows or the *banquillo* before them; the populace imagined the restoration of the old Spaniards to power under the shadow of Porteño protection; all classes dreaded such devastation in Paraguay as Artigas was causing in Entre Rios. Each class distrusted all the others; and, to all the others, each seemed the probable agent in the country's ruin. But great as was their mutual suspicion and distrust, all were unanimous in despising the governing *junta* and in regarding its members as hopelessly incompetent to deal with the situation. The *junta* felt the contempt of all classes, and were themselves diffident and bickering. Don Fernando de la Mora, whom you have met, resigned of his own accord and I took his place. That pompous old fool Cerda at once abandoned his duties in a huff. The rest, being in a helpless panic, did anything I suggested. I called a convention of the leaders of the populace from all parts of Paraguay. When Don Nicolas arrived he was lodged in the old Custom-house, treated with every civility and provided with every convenience for his comfort, but rigorously sequestered under the surveillance of Estagarribia, with Martinez superintending the pickets. I permitted no dabbler in politics to approach him. But, of course, the clergy all visited him. Pai Dalmacio was with him again and again. I thought nothing of their interviews one way or the other.

"I told Don Nicolas that any negotiations between Asuncion and Buenos Aires must begin with the affirmation of our mutual equality and mutual rights to the navigation of the Paraná and Paraguay as free, international rivers. To this he would not consent, and, indeed, could not, for the Porteños hold out obstinately for complete control of all river traffic.

"The negotiations hung and, when the convention unanimously approved my course and affirmed my contentions, Don Nicolas returned home in a rage.

"I had heard that, before he left Buenos Aires, he had instructions to procure my assassination. I had and have good friends in Buenos Aires itself, in Santa Fé, in Corrientes. They conveyed to me the information that Alvear himself had advised my extinction, had said that with me out of the way, he could fool or cajole, or bribe, all other Paraguayans. I have my doubts about that; Gumesindo is too fanatical a patriot to be bribed or cajoled or fooled; so is Fulgencio, brute beast as he is. And there are others. But let that pass. My agents wrote that Artigas refused to have anything to do with the plan, saying he fought his enemies openly; that Candiotti approved and gave not only advice, but money. They warned me to be very much on my guard, as Don Nicolas was commissioned to procure my death by any possible means. I thought I had taken every necessary precaution and chuckled when Don Nicolas was gone and I still alive.

"But, one morning, a day or two later, Pai Taboada came into the outer *patio*. We were not friends, but always mutually courteous. I should have offered him my snuff-box, as usual, but some difference in his expression caught my notice. I called to Zorilla:

"Search him!"

"He had a long dagger under his friar's habit.

"That is why Pai Dalmacio is in the prison with *grillos* on his ankles.

"There followed at intervals of about three months a series of attempts on my life which tried my nerves more than a little. Only the last of them interests you now. I was credibly informed that my former employer, my precious cousin Domingo Rodriguez, had openly bragged in Buenos Aires that he could easily kill me, had repeated the boast at Santa Fé and at Corrientes, had made agreements with Alvear, Candiotti and Perrichon.

"He returned to Asuncion with his Porteño wife and a considerable body of servants and attendants.

"I had been much shaken in spirit by my several narrow escapes and was in no mind to wait until he entered my presence, probably with a concealed poniard, in addition

indeed, would never have thought of the matter had not his host deemed it incumbent upon him to explain away a possible slight in sending Carmelo with his guest instead of Desiderio.

After breakfast the ladies and their maids fussed over their finery and children; the men superintended their valets, who brushed their clothes or furbished their buttons, swords, scabbards or saddle-gear. Hawthorne prepared himself for what it seemed to him would likely prove a sort of ordeal. For being used to ride with boots on he was nervous at the prospect of having to affix spurs to his lightest dancing pumps and ride six miles or more in silk stockings and the best of his new knee-breeches.

In accordance with Doña Juana Isquibel's admonition he was on horseback before the sun was hot. Leaving the Mayorga house all in a ferment, the ladies between fuming and merriment, scolding and laughter, the men less voluble, but equally intent, he rode off with young Don Carmelo. Both were magnificently horsed on blood-bay geldings and each was followed by a black man-servant on a cream-coloured mule.

Before they mounted Carmelo enquired:

"Would you like to swing round by the Payaguá Indians' *tolderia* and have a look at them?"

"Is it on our way?" Hawthorne queried.

"No," said Carmelo; "quite in the opposite direction from Itapuá. It is only about half a league to their *toldos*."

"I think I'll put that off till some other time," Hawthorne replied.

"This is their festival day," Carmelo explained. "St. John is their saint, though they are three-quarters heathens yet."

"What is the special attraction of their celebration?" Hawthorne asked.

"They'll outdo themselves this year," Carmelo replied, "as an eclipse of the moon is officially prophesied for to-night, and an eclipse means a good deal in Payaguá heathendom."

"I mean," Hawthorne amplified, "what do they do when they celebrate?"

"Oh," said Carmelo. "They squat around in a ring on the grass in the shade of some big trees. The women squat

behind them or wait on them. They have some big jars of brandy or *aguardiente* and the women fill a cocoanut cup for each man; the chief makes a speech, bows all round, and drinks first. Then the next most important man makes a speech and bows and drinks. So on all round the circle. Every year they apply for official leave to hold their festival. El Supremo grants the permission just as the Intendentes used to do. Like them he cautions the committee that they must not drink too much or fight. But they always do. By the end of the third round some of them are drunk, most of them during the fourth, all before the end of the fifth.

"Then they yell and fight; fight with their hands, like Englishmen; knock each other down, bloody each other's noses, knock out each other's teeth.

"When half of them are lying flat the women rush in and try to separate them. Half of them get mauled terribly.

"By and by they sober up. A Payaguá Indian so dead drunk you can't wake him with a blazing splinter held to his toe, will sober up out of doors if left alone two hours. When they all sober up enough to walk they link arms, just like English folk, and walk in procession, a very uneven, reeling, irregular procession, into the city, around each of the Monasteries, around each of the Churches, around the Cathedral, Plaza, Cabildo and Palacio, and so back to their *tolderia*. It's laughable to see them fight; more laughable to see them walk arm in arm. No other Indians in Paraguay fight with their fists or walk arm in arm; that's why we call the Payaguás '*los Indios Ingleses*'; they are, as it were, English Indians."

"It seems to me," Hawthorne commented, "that it would take all day to see enough of their festival to make looking on worth one's while. And I doubt if it would be worth while if we had all day for that only. I am for Itapúa at once."

"*Vamonos?*" was Carmelo's only reply, and they set off.

Hawthorne was delighted with the lanes through which they rode as soon as they were clear of the streets. Uniformly they were deep, trough-like depressions, with grassy banks, eight, ten or even twelve feet high on either side, shaded all along by varied and beautiful trees, whose

branches almost met overhead and shut out the heat of the sun, though admitting shafts of golden sunshine, cheerful and brilliant, while their trunks stood far enough apart to let in the breeze.

"Are these roads worn down this way by long traffic?" Hawthorne asked Don Carmelo.

"Could any traffic wear down roads as deep as these?" the Spaniard queried in his turn.

"Surely," said Hawthorne. "I have seen roads in the sandy parts of Virginia worn even deeper than these by mere washing of rains from what were at first just tracks across the rolling country."

"These are not such," Carmelo replied, "though we have sand enough and rain enough, one would think. In the old days, even from Irala's time, these cuttings were begun.

"A complete system of them, one for each approach to Asuncion, was completed by Don Hernando Arias de Saavedra, the Intendente who attempted the extermination of the warlike Guaranies. They were extended and deepened and new ones made for fully a hundred years after his death, as long as there were any hostile raiding natives left in Paraguay; for a mere handful of men with arquebuses could hold an artificial defile like this against any number of savages with bows and arrows, and, in those days, the country between was all dense forest, thorny and impenetrable."

"What a change since then!" Hawthorne exclaimed, looking out between the tree-trunks as they mounted the crest of a hill where the cut was shallowest.

The prospect was over a country not only well-watered, fertile and productive, but excellently cultivated and thickly inhabited. Palm trees appeared everywhere thrusting up from among the thickets and coppices of the stream-sides and valleys, towering over the prickly-pear hedges between the fields, dominating the lesser trees of the stretches of dense timber, topping off and tasselling the forested ridges.

There was plenty of woodland in sight, but more farmland. Sugar-cane broken by low rice-fields in between extended in close brakes over the flat meadow-lands by the innumerable streams; countless fields of Indian-corn, plots

of manioc, small fields or large patches of cotton and tobacco, coffee plantations, fig-orchards, banana and orange groves; gardens, showing between their cactus hedges muskmelons, watermelons, peppers, onions, garlic and cabbages. Every cottage, and they were not far apart, had a flower-garden as well as a vegetable garden, and each had its row of bee-hives.

The lanes were alive with market-women flocking into Asuncion. A few were in clumsy two-wheeled carts, some drawn by horses, others by mules, one or two even by little donkeys, but most by oxen. These carts without exception advanced spasmodically, sticking fast in the rutted sand, while the oxen panted, or the mules, horses or donkeys palpitated and puffed. When the occupant thought her team sufficiently rested she burst into shrill exclamations of encouragement, and plied her whip or goad. Thus urged the animals would tug the cart into motion and plunge or plod forward for fifty yards or so, pausing to repeat the operation.

More numerous, and, while less self-important, apparently more comfortable, were the women who rode astride of donkeys, mules or horses carrying each a pannier before its mistress, or who trudged beside the many donkeys, fewer mules and occasional horses whose twin panniers, heavily loaded with produce, forbade the owner to ride.

Most of the women were without pack-animals, and paced springily along carrying each on her head a jar of honey or rum, a sack of salt, a bale of tobacco, a pack of manioc or whatever merchandise she bore, done up in a parcel or bundle.

Their necks were always erect, their burdens easily borne, poised airily on their graceful heads, whose shining black braided hair set off in every case a pretty, good-natured countenance with bright brown eyes, rosy cheeks, small mouth and narrow, rounded chin.

All wore spotlessly clean *tupois* of white cotton, confined only by an embroidered belt, parti-coloured and bright, fringed with lace at the low neck and at the hem of the skirt over the trim, bare ankles and arched, small feet.

Hawthorne wondered how they kept their feet so dustless, polished and clean.

Even more he wondered at the behaviour of his horse and Don Carmelo's.

The mettlesome beasts were perfectly docile, never an instant unmanageable. Not once did they attempt to bolt, not once did they shy. Yet as they passed each wayfarer they minced, danced and gave little prancing leaps, dainty and pettish.

Don Carmelo explained that all gentlemen's mounts in Paraguay were carefully tamed to caracole when meeting any one; it had been the pride of the early settlers to ride beasts that showed their mettle, and the tradition had become consecrated by usage. No grandee would own a mount that did not display his training and prance a little for a foot-passer, a little more for a rider, and quite a deal for a cart or wagon.

Itapuá proved to be a hill-suburb, commanding a splendid view over the rolling country, the roundish, hog-backed hills and the rivulet-ribboned hollows between them. Westward one could spy two long curves of the great river and descry the purplish and misty bluish expanse of the Gran Chaco meeting the far horizon.

The Pythoness' estate was extensive, including many tenanted farms whose boundaries and names Don Carmelo indicated as they rode along its outskirts. Her home had magnificent orchards about it, a generous stretch of smiling gardens, an ample horse-paddock, and an exquisitely kept lawn, before the grove of orange-trees shading the mansion itself, the first glimpse of which gave Hawthorne a vivid impression of intervals of intense blue sky between the many trees, pigeons wheeling in flocks or cooing on long ridge-poles, red expanses of tiled roofs, and white-washed adobe-walls.

It was all of one high-ceilinged story about a spacious *patio*, and had along its front a deep-verandahed portico, its roof supported by six pillars, rudely but tastefully carved, its floor of brick, level with the ground.

As Hawthorne and Carmelo reined up in front of the verandah, out from under it came the amazingly youthful octogenarian, tripping like a girl, yet with an odd mixture of almost sedate dignity beneath her surface vivacity, a proud, matronly poise under her frothy ebullition of high spirits.

"*Viva! viva! viva!*" she cried three times. "*Bien venido!* Welcome, Guillermo. It is so good of you to come to see our preparations, to help with the rest of them. I am so glad to see you."

As the grooms led off the horses she gave him both her hands, squeezing his big blunt fingers between hers, drew him towards her, and kissed him in a truly motherly fashion.

Beltran, behind her, greeted him with easy intimacy and the two exchanged some more mutual felicitations on soft beds, sound sleep and appetising food, and more reminiscent objurgations against jerked beef and mosquitoes.

Doña Juana wore such a costume as Hawthorne had not beheld in Paraguay and never saw there afterwards. As when he had first seen her, as were all the native ladies he met that day or later, in that land of Arcadian simplicity, she was without stays. Even more than at his first sight of her Hawthorne marvelled at the youthful and healthy outlines of the aged lady's figure, displayed by her low-necked, gold-belted gown of crimson silk, all scrolled with embroideries of a silk of the same hue, conventionalised vines whose tendrils wound in curves and whose flowers were gold thread like the loose girdle.

Under its lower edge her pointed black slippers seemed not six inches long.

Above its gathering-ribbon her neck showed not a wrinkle. pink and smooth, in astonishing and startling contrast to the brown folds of her throat and the dried-apple wrinkles of her merry old face. She had not lost all her teeth, and those remaining were white and straight; her hair was grey, a beautiful, clean silver-grey, and became her decidedly, set off by silver combs and a red flower over one ear.

"Come, Guillermo," she chirped, "you must see our preparations before the guests begin to arrive."

First of all she led him to her *potrero*, the large paddock where the horses of her two hundred odd guests were to be turned out for the night. Next to the stables, where Hawthorne's mount was in a stall by Don Carmelo's.

"I'm going to stable all the horses for Vicente's family," Doña Juana remarked, "and for all the Recaldes, and Gregorio's and Ventura's and dear old Bernardo's and Gas-



par's, of course, and his lancers besides, or they'll burn the place down, I suppose. The rest are to be turned out into the *potrero*, and good enough for anybody, too!"

From the stables she took him into the orange groves and showed the pots and kettles swung and spits and jacks set over heaps of fuel laid ready for lighting, near larger piles ranked for replenishing them, where the outdoor cooking was to be managed, since her kitchens would barely suffice for cooking to satisfy her distinguished guests, and substantials must be hot and plenty for all comers and their countless servants. She called his attention to the festoons of flowers that hung from tree to tree, and the gay, parti-coloured lanterns strung in long line, each ready to be lighted. Then they surveyed the similar decorations of the verandah and of the *patio*, Doña Juana smiling and chattering like a little girl.

Then, with a great air of expectancy, Hawthorne was conducted through the big drawing-rooms into a smaller *sala*. There, at its farther end, was a blaze of wax candles, fat and tall, set in candlesticks of carved wood, heavily gilded.

Their bases were hidden in fragrant boughs of flowering orange, lime and acacia, banked on either side of a glass-fronted, glass-sided case fully eight feet high and nearly three feet square. In it was a figure of St. John the Baptist, after the Spanish idea and in the Spanish taste. He was represented as no wild man of the desert, as no rough, hairy fanatic. Not he. He appeared as a sleek and meek devotee, his hair new gilded, his face smug with fresh paint, eyes blue, lashes bright black, every separate hair of them; eyebrows pencilled, cheeks glowing pink, lips red, skin polished. On his head was a magnificent tiara of gold filigree-work; his broad lace collar was weighed down by jewelled gold chains, spread grandly over his black velvet robe, which was open enough to show the embroidered girdle confining his snow-white tunic, and whose opulent blackness set off the many bright-gemmed rings loading his slender fingers. Under its hem the straps of his sandals gleamed with pearls.

Behind him were rocks, moss and trees to represent the wilderness in which he cried; over him hovered a pink and gold cherub; altogether he was an unsurpassable saint.

Next Hawthorne was given an opportunity to admire the arrangements for the dancing, the hundreds of wax candles ready to light, the slippery surface of the gleaming floors, the forethought for the comfort of the musicians, and the lavish provision of edibles. The noted confectioners of Asuncion had outdone themselves in the preparation of *dulces*, almond paste, milk candy cut into cubes, nougats of various nuts, candied cactus, and other local dainties.

Last he was shown the provisions made for abundance of solid viands, the kitchens and the cooks.

"I'm hungry now at the thought of it," Doña Juana declared. "Let us have dinner."

Dinner was as varied and heavy as at the Mayorgas', although only four of them sat down to it.

"Nothing like a good hearty dinner," said Doña Juana, "and a long siesta after it. That will put us all in fine condition for dancing."

Certainly she did justice to her excellent fare. Hawthorne had a good New England appetite, not yet compensated for in the privations of the river. Yet he could not eat nearly as much as his aged hostess.

Dinner over, the voluble old lady lit her huge cigar, and dismissed Hawthorne, Don Carmelo and her grandson to their rooms for a siesta. Hawthorne slept long and well. Refreshed with sleep and a generous splashing in plenty of water he sallied out into the last hour of the afternoon, just as the lengthening shadows began to abate the heat, which, even in June, Paraguayan midwinter, Hawthorne found oppressive. The natives, comparing the temperature with that of their midsummer, December, called June cool, and had no objection at that time of year to being abroad even at midday. By midafternoon, therefore, they began to arrive.

First came *paysitos*, country beaux, escorting their sweethearts or sisters and sometimes their brides. The poorer brought their charges on pillions behind their saddles, or convoyed nags or mules carrying two girls each, one in the saddle, the other on the pillion. The richer cantered beside two or three or more well-horsed ladies, riding astride.

Soon there came into sight characteristic ox-teams, four or six oxen to a vehicle, and capable of full two miles an

hour, if constantly goaded by the peon driver, who walked beside the wheelers. They were yoked by a beam, almost a log, fastened with raw-hide thongs across in front of their long horns, which were adorned with bright ribbons, pink, red and yellow, sometimes blue. They drew two-wheeled carts or four-wheeled wagons, springless and jolting, but deep with soft mattresses and cushions, on which, under the gaily striped awnings, reclined or sat the ladies, interspersed with misses, girls and little boys, and three out of every four carrying each her infant. They were escorted by their men-folk on horseback, all in ball-room attire, with huge silver spurs over their dancing-pumps, white silk stockings on their shapely calves (against which slapped the flat leather scabbards of their jangling sabres), satin knee-breeches, and coats with far too broad facings of silk or satin or velvet, all of gay colours, no two alike, and all rather more than less tarnished, faded and worn, obviously old, sometimes even manifestly heirlooms. Thrown gracefully over their shoulders and dangling behind them fluttered their *capotes*, ample cloaks of the old Spanish cut, generally scarlet, and with white-silk linings, mostly not so threadbare as the coats they set off. These were families of *hacendados*, farmers owning their own land, and mighty proud of it.

Similarly convoyed arrived the families of the *tenderos*, shopkeepers of Asuncion, who reckoned themselves a peg above the country proprietors and wore costumes equally grotesque in cut and far more gaudy in colour, glaring with ostentatious newness.

Among and following them came the rich *comerciantes*, ship-owners or capitalists and their families, the ladies in mule-carts, scarcely less clumsy than the ox-wagons.

Even the poorest *paysitos* had been attended by at least one servant, the *hacendados* by two or more each, besides slave-girls with their wives; the *tenderos* brought nurse-maids, ladies' maids, valets and also their cooks to assist with the supper. The capitalists came with a small horde of negresses and mulattoes.

Hawthorne, quite at home by that time, and only occasionally and casually encountering Carmelo or Doña Juana, who left him tactfully to his own devices, sometimes watched the arrivals, sometimes the hauling of the wagons,

carts and carriages to the rear of the house, sometimes the turning of the horses into the *potrero* or of the oxen into their larger field, where they grazed sedately, still yoked in couples.

Then behold a sober-hued procession wound up the road from under the shade-trees, a line of bobbing umbrellas, golden against the slant sun-rays; under them bare-headed, tonsured friars, all obese; Franciscans in brown; black-cloaked Dominicans in white, and Recoletanos in grey, their bare, sandalled feet sticking out under their flowing habits, their mounts sleek and fat, their saddles like those of the gentry, high-peaked, and gaudy with silver mountings over their velvet or plush, red, yellow, green or blue; their mules and horses banded and tasselled with housing to match their saddles.

With each company of friars was the convent band, mounted on mules, carrying their instruments under their arms or across the saddle in front of them.

Every friar had a sunshade, all were portly and rubicund, still more portly their jovial priors, Pai Procopio Baca, Prior of the Recoletanos; Padre Ignacio Maestre, Prior of the Dominicans; Fray Santiago Reloyos, Prior of the Franciscans, and, most portly of all, Vicar General Damaso Montiel, acting head of the Paraguayan church in the absence of the Bishop.

They swung heavily off their grunting mounts, removed their broad-brimmed hats, and knelt down out of reverence for St. John.

The bands played *jubilate*.

After the tune came to an end all rose and trooped into the house to pay their respects to St. John in person.

When most of them were in the house, the sound of a high, shrill, squalling shriek, apparently from miles away, struck faintly but distinctly on their ears in the silence after the band-playing.

"The Payaguás are having their festival," Fray Ignacio Maestre remarked, "as well as we, and their fun is at its height."

"Can any human voice be heard three leagues?" Hawthorne asked Carmelo as the last friar vanished through the doorway.

"A sober Payaguá," said Carmelo, "can make himself

heard a league and a half at least in calm weather. A whole band of Payaguás, all drunk, can be heard three leagues in all directions and on a still night four leagues."

After the friars, came, with retinues of slave-women and men-servants, the Spanish aristocracy of Asuncion, Jovelanoses, Recaldes, Echagües, Figueredos, Doméques and Mayorgas. The ladies rode in antique carriages modelled on the state coaches of Madrid, of the Viceroy of Lima, of the Intendentes of Buenos Aires; heavy vehicles, swung on long leather straps, between axles very far apart. These were drawn by mules; the Mayorga coach alone by horses, and it alone had the spokes of its wheels gilded, an ostentation affected only by families laying claims to descent from the haughty stock of Spanish grandees, to whom this pretension was acquiesced in by their compatriots.

Beside these coaches, before them, behind them, pranced the dainty-footed steeds of their men-folk, attired in garb less ancient than the *paysitos*, less glaring than the *tenderos*, but equally antiquated. Their saddles were like those of the farmers, traders and friars, but even more velvety, more highly peaked, more heavily studded and edged with silver ornaments. They differed from the rest in that there dangled beside their white-silk calves not the heavy sabres of the country beaux and proprietors, nor the short hangers of the traders and merchants, but the long slender rapiers of Castilian court tradition.

Last, according to their conception of their dignity and importance, came those who had taken part in the local government. Some were family men beside mule-drawn carryalls: Don Gumesindo Estagarribia, Secretary of State, more Castilian than any Spaniard, yet immensely proud of his Creole birth, fat, and vastly self-important, pompous in his blue coat, red waistcoat, white knee-breeches and crimson *capote*, displaying himself one huge republican cockade, swelling on his big, black horse; Don Larios Galvan, ex-secretary and proud of that, small and dark, in sober black, as became a doctor of laws; Don Jacinto Ruiz, ex-notary of the second *junta*, somewhat plumper than Don Larios and even more dignified, but gay in green and yellow for the occasion; Don Fernando de la Mora, ex-member of a *junta*, and their friends and equals, doctors of laws all, Don Porfirio Somellera, Don Eustaquio Baiz,

Don Plutarco Bedoya. With them rode that jovial grass-widower, Don Jenofonte Bargas, his huge head of hair all pomatum and frizzes under his gold-laced cocked hat. Later, yet more doctors of laws, Don Hilarion Decoud, young Don Policarpo Patiños, and Don Andres Villarino, secretaries to the dread Dictator.

Also there were the ex-generals, Don Jerman Caballero on a dapple-grey, and Don Fulgencio Yegros on an astonishing cream-coloured stallion; and with them other ex-members of the *juntas*; priests independently wealthy, without parish duties and living like bachelors of leisure; Padre Don Melquiades Caballero, uncle of the Dictator, Padre Don Lisardo Bogarin, both former members of *juntas*, and with them Padre Don Raimundo Loisaga. Except Bogarin they were swordless, but otherwise undistinguishable from the black-garbed doctors of laws. Along with or after them came the *curanderos*, practitioners of medicine or surgery, Don Esopo Narvaez, Don Fructuoso Baiguer, Don Enrique Sabola.

Among and between these dignitaries and ex-dignitaries dribbled in the thinning stream of *paysitos* and *paysitas*. With the last of these appeared a notable cavalcade: gentle, modest old Don Bernardo Velasco, attended only by his one servant; Don Gregorio de la Cerda, aloft on a long-legged, long-bodied, sleek white horse, a chattering little godson on the saddle-peak in front of him, a merry little goddaughter on the pillion behind him, her fairy fingers playing with the big, flat white mother-of-pearl buttons of his light drab coat, around which her slender little arms were clasped; and Don Manuel Bianquet, in quiet brown, a very small hanger at his side, beaming with happiness upon the six-ox wagon they convoyed, where, with four other ladies and several misses and little boys, rode his little boys and pretty daughters with their more than pretty mother, Doña Juanita, and her beautiful charge, Señorita Ventura Velarde.

The arrival of this vehicle before the portico started a thrilling rumour which ran through all the assemblage, indoors and out, from the *patio* to the *potrero*, and brought them flocking from the orange-groves, the lawns and the drawing-rooms. All came. The friars dissembled their curiosity, the dons made no pretence of dissembling, the

women, Spanish dignity completely thrown off, were almost a mob about the two ladies.

For Doña Juanita, bewitching in a modish Porteño ball-gown of pale blue silk, cut according to the latest fashion of Buenos Aires, and Ventura, high-coloured with excitement and magnificent in a similar canary-coloured satin, wore corsets!

Corsets were then for the first time worn by any woman on Paraguayan soil. For the first time a corseted waist was beheld by admiring dons and envious Señoras of Asunción.

Hawthorne, in the background under the portico, gazed with interest and amusement at the scene. Under the waning light of the last moments before sunset the slant rays fell on the knot of soberly garbed friars, nudging each other and giggling behind their hands, on the ring of parti-coloured gallants surrounding the women, on the heaving, jostling, chattering mob of excited ladies, all talking at once, loudly and shrilly, all screaming with excitement, all pushing to get near, a mass of dark heads, pink necks and white gowns about the central spot of colour, Doña Juanita in blue, Señorita Ventura in yellow, and old Doña Juana in crimson beside them, admiring and shrieking down the murmurs of the scandalised few.

The first fury of interest abated by a hasty inspection of the novel fashion, the newcomers passed through their welcomers to pay their respects to St. John.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FIESTA AT ITAPUÁ

THE sun set over the hills of the Gran Chaco in a whirl of gold and crimson cloud streamers, an unsurpassable display of splendours; the moon rose calm and full over the varied prospect of winding silver streams, cultivated valleys and wooded hillsides, as bright as ever moon shone from any sky.

The lamps and candles indoors, the lanterns in the *patio* and in the groves were lighted. The convent bands, the

Dominican under the verandah, the Franciscan in the *patio*, the Recoletano and that of the Cathedral out on the lawn on either side of the house, burst into gay music, fiddles and 'cellos, clarinets and hautboys, all shrilling together. Everybody who was not crowding about St. John in one *sala*, or Ventura and Juanita in another, was dancing in the largest *sala* of all, in the *patio*, or in the verandah, or else was already eating in the dining-hall or among the orange trees, where the long trestle-tables were spread under the festoons of lanterns.

While the brilliance of the moonlight and the blaze of the candles within and the lanterns without was still mingled with and subdued by the soft glow of the brief twilight, the cry was raised by the watchers on the road and passed on to the mansion:

“*Carai! Carai!*”

The music redoubled, all the bands at once playing the five-year-old national air, the tune Zevallos' cavalry had sung at the second battle of Paraguay. At the sound of it and the continued calls of

“*Carai! Carai!*”

dancing and feasting were suspended for the time, and all, gentlemen and ladies, maids and serving men, save the musicians and a few cooks, flocked to the portico and the awns to welcome the Dictator.

Six lancers rode before him, the tricolour pennons on their lances aflutter, their red forage caps jauntily atilt, their yellow faces serious, their white coats flying open over their red waistcoats, their white trousers tucked into their top-boots of respectable European pattern, their sabres clanking, their slung carbines swinging to and fro; six rode behind him, their officer well in their rear. Midway of the long interval between the two squads rode Francia, his crimson *capote* draped gracefully over his left shoulder and fluttering behind him, his form very erect in his tight-fitting blue general's uniform coat.

At the mid-front of the portico Don Beltran assisted the great man to alight and Doña Juana greeted him. Bopí, who had ridden up on mule-back some time before and loitered about unnoticed, slipped through the crowd, knelt down, and unbuckled the spurs from his master, who there-



upon passed into the house, into the second of the smaller *salas*. There, standing between the windows, Doña Juana, Beltran, Hawthorne, Don Gumesindo Estagarribia and his two secretaries about him, he was offered and partook of his *maté*, which he prepared deliberately, Doña Juana taking the bowl from the tray on which a servant held the urn and other apparatus, and offering it to him with her own hands.

Meanwhile the dancing and feasting recommenced. Outside the moonlight was brighter than any silver. Yet the big, cool stars came out clear in the velvety bluish-blackness of the tropic firmament, and the yellow glare from the windows and the glow of the jewel-coloured lanterns in the groves sent long shafts of radiance between the shrubberies across the grass.

Beyond the variegated brilliance about the mansion the landscape, a rolling alternation of greenish-black rounded hills and mist-filled valleys, was all one pearly glimmer under the moon. Out of its translucent dimness emerged white-clad troops of peasantry, each party with one or more guitars twanging as they came. Unmasked and completely welcome, they flocked in on the rumour of gaieties of the great folk, gathered about the outdoor fires or tables, and danced about the edges of the groves or lawns. Their *guitarreros* taking up and reinforcing the tune of the nearest band, they shared in and added to the pleasure of their betters nearer the house, about it or inside. Hawthorne admired and relished the mutual comprehension and perfect amenity of all classes in their revelry.

Indoors, the chief spectacle, while it lasted, was Francia's reception, for such his visit inevitably became. After he had partaken of his *maté*, paid his respects to Saint John in his crystal shrine, passed through the card-room, where his entrance caused a hush, traversed the larger *salas*, in which the dancing took on a subtle difference while he looked on, and viewed from the verandah the revelry of the populace on the lawn and the beauty of the moonlit prospect, Francia returned to the small *sala*. To one corner, beyond the right hand window, his hosts tactfully withdrew, Hawthorne with them. In the opposite corner hovered the great man's two secretaries, middle-aged Don Andres Villarino and young Don Policarpo Patiños; and

also, after they had severally paid their respects, Don Gumesindo Estagarribia, Secretary of State, even more pompous on foot than on horseback; Don Olegario Decoud, State Treasurer, a dry, spare, hook-nosed old man, cousin of Don Hilarion Decoud; Don Basilio Goyez, Finance Minister, not a particle abashed by his recent night in the guard-house; Don Ponciano Velaustegui, State Notary Public, and Don Lorenzo Marote, Assessor of Customs.

Scores of wax tapers set in tall, silver-shafted candelabra, topping taller standards of heavily gilt carved wood, stuck in brass sconces, standing in girandoles on the brackets, made the room a blaze of light. The windows, nine feet high from floor to lintel, gaped wide, unglazed like all house windows then in Paraguay. Between the two, in front of a dark red wall, stood the Dictator.

On his trim feet were low, square-toed shoes with small gold buckles. Above his white silk stockings equally small gold buckles fastened his white cassimere knee-breeches. His waistcoat was of the same white cassimere, the only white waistcoat in all that motley assemblage. His court-sword, the merest thread of a rapier, had a fine hilt with white shagreen on the grip, wound with gold wire, and the guard and pommel gold also. His coat was long-tailed, faced with buff, and itself of a very dark blue, set off by narrow gold lace. His hair was powdered and gathered into a close queue behind. His high forehead, piercing black eyes, straight, chisel-edged nose, firm mouth and small, strong jaw made up a face that no one could have failed to see belonged to a born leader of men. There were in his figure and pose not a little of the majesty of Napoleon and still more of the impressive personal rectitude that irradiated Washington.

To pay their respects to him the guests began to flock in from the other *salas*, from the *patio*, from the verandah, even from out of doors. As soon as the stream of salutants was well in motion Doña Juana slipped off to look after the larger multitudes of her humbler guests, after the countless children and their numerous mothers.

Hawthorne, at first alone with Beltran, saw approach to do homage and pass in review, all the important men of Asuncion, among them every one of the conspirators of Dr. Bargas' wine-shop; all the rest of Francia's enemies

whom he saw there for the first time, and with them many of their sons, wives and sisters.

There was a certain conscious but wordless and entirely spontaneous arrangement of the courtiers. According to instinctive local ideas of precedence and their mutual sense of their relative importance and standing in the community they marshalled themselves.

First came the clergy, Vicar-General Montiel, the three priors, and their lesser brethren in white, brown and grey; then the priests of the city parishes; lastly those unattached priestly idlers, whose functions in the community Hawthorne had not yet comprehended to his own full satisfaction; Padre Don Melquiades Caballero, the Dictator's uncle and former associate on the first government *junta*; Padre Raimundo Loisaga and Fray Lisardo Bogarin, still wearing his strange jumble of incongruous garments and his discordant sabre.

Francia's greeting to all was most tactful, subtly differentiated according to each man's individuality, yet uniformly gracious and kindly, particularly to his ascetic uncle.

Then came the ex-generals. Hawthorne watched with keen interest Francia's manner towards these men, whom he had stripped of the honours and emoluments they had won by their sudden promotions and largely accidental successes during the brief war for independence. Their demeanour towards him varied from Gamarra's servile cringing, through Yegros' timidity ill-concealed beneath a too truculent bravado; Zevallos' bungling attempt at an assumption of jauntiness; Cabañas' impeccable gentlemanliness to Caballero's awkward frigidity. Francia showed no sense of triumph over them nor of condescension. He adapted himself to each, conversed a bit with each; thawed his cousin's attempt at icy reserve; put Zevallos at ease with a jest; shook the ex-consul's hand heartily again and again, calling him "*compañero*"; was neither curt nor contemptuous to Gamarra, and looked into Cabañas' eyes with frank pleasure.

"Don Atancio," he said, retaining his grasp of his hand and placing the left hand on the epauletted shoulder, "I am always glad to see you. Come oftener to the Government House. You are eternally welcome. If all those with whom I have had the misfortune to have differences

accepted the present state of affairs as you do I should be a happier man and Paraguay a luckier country."

He was almost equally cordial to ex-colonel Don Sinforiano Guerreros and a half-dozen more ex-colonels, all inclined to be sulky as they approached, all smiling as they passed on, each soothed by some apt compliment.

The meeting between the ex-Intendente and the Dictator was to Hawthorne a beautiful and pathetic sight. Francia's bearing showed no self-congratulation at receiving the homage of the former governor to whose power and prerogatives he had more than succeeded; he appeared as a younger man glad to greet an older man for whose past kindness he was sincerely grateful. Don Bernardo, on his part, during his approach to Francia and his chat with him, wore the self-same smile of universal good-will with which he had greeted Doña Juana or beamed upon Don Gregorio's favourite godchildren.

Don Gregorio, in fact, followed Don Bernardo, upon some subtle assumption that his position as godfather in general to all Paraguay made him only less important than an ex-governor.

After him came those other ex-members of past *juntas* who were neither clerical nor military: Don Larios Galvan, Don Jacinto Ruiz, and Don Fernando de la Mora. For these Francia had but a brief word apiece, though he exchanged views on the gout with Don Fernando before greeting the other doctors of laws; Don Plutarco Bedoya, Don Hilarion Decoud, Don Porfirio Somellera, and the rest. Hawthorne remarked something revolting in Don Porfirio's personality and in his bearing towards the Dictator. He had a very long, thin nose, the tip of which overhung his upper lip, suggesting a tapir's semi-proboscis. Yet the impression he made was more reptilian than mammalian. Francia's demeanour towards this would-be demagogue was the perfection of discretion, as it was likewise, though with a difference, towards Don Eustaquio Baiz, his rival for the secretaryship of the first *junta*. For Dr. Bargas, that flamboyant Mendozan, he had a genial, if distinctly amused, greeting.

Following the doctors of laws came the doctors of medicine, all in black: pompous Dr. Fructuoso Baiguer, lean old Dr. Arsenio Dominguez, fat old Dr. Esopo Narvaez,

staid Dr. Enrique Sabola, and last Dr. Parlett, very sober.

"Ah, Don Tomas!" Francia exclaimed. "Charmed to see you. If any one overeats, all the wisdom of the London College of Surgeons is at hand to save a precious life. Cured any more cases of lockjaw, Don Tomas?"

"No other case of *pasma real* has been presented to me for cure," Parlett replied.

"You might cure another," Francia rejoined. "Two happy accidents are possible. For I maintain, Don Tomas, that *pasma real* can never be cured except by accidental survival. But you deserve all the repute you gained by that cure, for your genuine cures are almost equally marvellous."

Dr. Parlett, when released from the Dictator's banter, joined Hawthorne and stood beside him, commenting from time to time on Francia or on those at the moment in talk with him.

Among the shoal of men distinguished only by wealth who followed, Hawthorne saw Francia honour Don Vicente Mayorga by special geniality. But he concealed with difficulty, apparently, his contempt for the brothers-in-law, Don Gil Romero and Don Arturo Balaguer. Hawthorne overheard him say to Mayorga, whom he had detained after the others had passed on, "You know, Vicente, how much I value your solid contribution to the prosperity of our community, but I lose my patience whenever I am reminded of the parasites you support, of those butterfly idlers. Do-nothings are almost worse than mischief-makers."

Yet he thawed completely to Romero's little son.

Of the entire spectacle, so novel and so gorgeous, because of the rich velvet, silks and satins, the profusion of gold and silver lace, the glitter of scabbard-hilts and buttons, no feature struck Hawthorne more than the presence of many little boys, not merely of twelve or so, but positively of ten or even of no more than eight, habited precisely after the same fashion as their elders, with little gold-headed canes in their hands, beplumed, minute cocked hats under their arms, and minikin court-swords at their sides, comporting themselves with all the gravity and self-possession proper to men of sixty.

Of these not the least charming was wee Don Manrique Romero, a really cherubic child, and a perfect miniature

of his handsome father to the last thread of his clothing, his tiny feet in iridescent shoes with gold buckles, his Lilliputian court sword, daintily managed, never in the way of his white silk calves, his graceful childishness gorgeous in a red-satin waistcoat, glaringly green satin knee-breeches and red-faced green satin coat. As grave as any Don, General or ecclesiastic of them all, he made his obeisance to the Dictator with perfect ease and propriety and was received like the rest of these strange children, even more than the rest of them, with the gravest and most formal courtesy, as a person of the greatest importance, with no tinge of sarcasm in the great man's carefully considerate manner.

As to Mayorga, Francia was more than kindly to Don Antonio Recalde and Don Pascual Echagüe and conversed with them about imports, warehousing and wholesale trade as he did with other "Dons" about retailing and shop-keeping, and about river-navigation, ship-captains, and crews with Don Meliton Isasi and Don Mauricio Zelaya.

Hawthorne mentally commended the Dictator for the way in which he made easy for poor Don José Carísimo his palpitating and fluttering attempt at apologies. The fat old gentleman was a mere quaking bog of jelly as he approached the Dictator, his calves waggling in his white silk stockings, his paunch swagging pendulously, his triple chin undulating, his cheeks wagging. His voice died away.

"A mere slip of the tongue," Francia said. "Of course, I had to be stern, but that was meant for others who might have presumed intentionally. I comprehended perfectly, I assure you."

The sight of Don Lampadio Casal of Limpio and his cousin, Don Ladislao Casal of Ibirai, brought a smile of lively pleasure to the Dictator's countenance.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "If all wealthy Paraguayans were as loyal patriots as you two, governing would indeed be a bed of rose-leaves."

Don Cipriano Doméque Francia greeted more nearly with hauteur than any man whose approach to him Hawthorne observed. To Don Bermudo Larreta, that very bald man, he said merely:

"I have always the same thought at sight of you, Ber-

mudo, and that is: how can a tongue be at once so blunt and so sharp?"

Don Prudencio la Guardia he greeted heartily, shaking him by the hand and calling him "My dearest enemy!"

"If all my enemies," he continued, "were as open and as fair as you, Don Prudencio, I should find the world far easier to cope with."

As the throng began to thin out men commenced to bring up their wives, sisters and daughters to greet the Dictator. Some, like the dignitaries and ex-dignitaries, the Mayorgas and Recaldes, had themselves previously made their obeisance; others, like obese Don Baltasar Figueredo and his tall blonde wife, or bony Don Renato Jovellanos and his plump little Doña Pancha, appeared then for the first time. Many more couples followed, and then a sort of jumble of several men and a few women, all manifestly embarrassed

"Watch Petrona Zevallos-Machain!" Parlett whispered to Hawthorne.

In fact, the leader of the uneasy band was Don Cayetano Machain, Francia's successful rival, who seemed now to gain a sort of countenance from the presence of his wife, to feel that she shed about her an atmosphere, so to say, of support and protection. So, for that matter, it seemed that his and her kin felt; for his brother, dry, spare Don Estanislao, her brother Segundo Zevallos, their cousins, the Caballeros, all came up in flock, as it were, under the shadow of her wing; even military Don Valeriano Zevallos and Don Jerman Caballero reappearing in her train, as also old Padre Melquiades Caballero.

Reflecting on the tale of heart-burning and deceptions he had heard from Don Bernardo, Hawthorne watched, with more than curiosity, this first meeting after so many years between the jilted scholar and the fiercely regretted sweetheart, whose loss had so embittered him, in the presence of the very men whose lies had separated them.

Doña Petrona was pale but self-possessed; Francia kindly and reminiscent, with no tinge of any remains of burnt-out resentment.

It was interesting also to compare Francia with his numerous cousins and note the similarities and differences. Each was a little like him in some single characteristic;

one in bearing, another in expression, yet others in some one feature. Don Estanislao, whose full face did not resemble Francia in the least, showed a visible similarity when both were viewed in profile, though the likeness was by no means as striking when the two men were together as it had been when Don Estanislao had suddenly appeared in the doorway at Dr. Bargas' wine-shop.

After the convocation of cousins had come and gone, leaving only old Padre Melquiades, Francia's favourites, Don Vicente, General Cabañas, and the two Casals gravitated naturally back to him and formed a group about him in animated converse.

To the Dictator thus surrounded, approached Don Manuel Bianquet with his handsome Doña Juanita. Beltran himself was in the act of presenting them when in the doorway opposite the Dictator appeared Doña Juana and Don Gregorio de la Cerda, conveying between them Señorita Ventura Velarde. She caught Francia's attention the instant she stood framed in the doorway, her yellow satin bright like a flame flanked by Doña Juana's deep crimson gown and Don Gregorio's pearl drab coat, her raven black coiffure conspicuous between her godmother's silver locks and her godfather's powdered curls.

Hawthorne, electrified instanter, missed no feature of the situation. Francia called Don Manuel by name, acknowledged Beltran's presentation of the sojourning merchant and his newly arrived wife, was gracious, spoke fittingly though briefly with both the lady and her husband, but did it all mechanically, as if in a trance. Hawthorne half suspected that he never really saw at all either Don Manuel or Doña Juanita, any more than if they had not been present. His eyes were only for Ventura from the moment they lighted on her.

The Bianquets passed on; Ventura and her god-parents approached.

Midway of Ventura's graceful curtsy Francia spoke:

"My dear young lady, you are very like your mother."

And he took both of her hands, as if she were an old friend.

"Your mother," he continued, "I never spoke to. A Carranza was too high for a poor student lad. But she threw me a rose once; I have it still, dried where I pressed



it in between the leaves of my *Cancionero General*. Our eyes never met but that once, yet I recognise her eyes in your eyes. I saw her but twice later and never, of course, after she went to live at San Bernardino. But you seem very like her, in all respects, though even more beautiful."

Ventura, naturally, blushed almost as crimson as her godmother's silk gown. Francia, quick to rise to a situation, recommenced:

"Apart from any recollections of your sainted mother, I have been most eager to meet you since I heard of your return to Paraguay. I wish to learn from you all I can of President Madison, of the English court, still more of the court of Napoleon. You are at home in French, of course. Let us talk French. I enjoy using that language and rarely have an opportunity to converse in it."

At this Ventura recovered her self-possession. Francia was capable of diffusing a magical personal charm when he chose and now he exerted all his powers. Ventura felt the fascination of his personality and felt also, at once, that she was receiving no superficial compliment to her good looks, but that the great man was immediately interested not only in what she had to say, but also in the way she said it. She relished the tribute to her intellectuality and warmed to her subject. She was a good talker and enjoyed talking. He looked down at her not as an elderly recluse to a pretty girl, but as one cultured being to another in a converse where age and sex were not factors at all. She looked up at him, not as a fiery loyalist devotee to a revolutionary free-thinker, but as a cosmopolitan of wide experience with a superfluity of information to impart to an appreciative listener.

At once, as if by magic, some subtle comprehension led every human being to withdraw, as speedily and unobtrusively as possible, from that *sala*, leaving only Don Gregorio with Doña Juana in one corner and Beltran with Doña Juanita in the other. With only this chaperonage and obviously utterly unconscious of it, Francia and Ventura stood, immediately intimate and deep in an absorbing conversation.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## MOONLIT SURPRISES

(1)

HAWTHORNE, with Dr. Parlett, making his way out among the last, encountered Don Basilio Goyez.

"Is he not a great man?" Don Basilio exclaimed enthusiastically. "Sometimes we forget how great a man he is. But he puts us in our place at once. You saw him put me in my place the other day. It is an honour to be rebuked in such a fashion by so great a man. One feels ennobled. It has a tonic effect on one's whole individuality. We love him all the better for it, we Creoles. And all of us love him anyhow. Only the Spaniards, the Goths, resent his directness. We Creoles applaud, seeing that he is always in the right."

Dr. Parlett laughed, which did not seem to disturb Don Basilio a particle. Hawthorne did not laugh. He was beginning to perceive that not merely the Guaranies idolised Francia. Here was a fresh confirmation of the fact.

Beyond Don Basilio he found himself between Doña Pancha Jovellanos and Doña Encarnacion Figueredo. Looking around for Don Baltasar and Don Renato, and not perceiving either, he immediately offered to take Doña Encarnacion in to supper; Dr. Parlett, fairly quick socially when sober, promptly made the like offer to Doña Pancha, and the four sought the supper room together.

Eating was no bar to Doña Encarnacion's volubility.

"Baltasar told me the other night," she said, "that we were predestined to be good friends, and I think so myself."

"Here's another Don Guillermo," he told me. "Not unlike your young Scotchman, and better looking. Perhaps he'll take you out riding, like Señor Robairson. Blue-eyed men named Guillermo appear naturally to belong to you, Encarnacion." So I hope you and I are to be good friends, Don Guillermo."

To which Hawthorne most heartily assented, for he purposed to enlist the sympathies of this tall blonde in behalf of Doña Cecilia.

It seemed to him that they were a long time at supper, for his appetite was more quickly satisfied than those of the *Asuncianas*. When at last they left the table he freed himself at the first opportunity and wandered from room to room observing the doings of the other guests.

The little boys interested him most. A few, still in their gaudy grown-up fineries, were dancing stately minuets or ever statelier sarabands with little girls no older than themselves, but fully as dignified. The most, however, had been disembarrassed of their cocked hats, court swords, canes, coats and waistcoats, and were playing about like children of any land. Many were already drowsing, their heads in their nurses' laps.

The dancing of the elders was a delightful spectacle to Hawthorne. The contrast between the parti-coloured finery of the men and the universal simplicity of the white-clad women had in it something idiosyncratic and striking. The participants were uniformly graceful. There was no awkwardness anywhere, all seemed born dancers, and most of them amazingly well skilled besides; Don Saturnino Bedoya, more like a giant canary than ever, evidently the best among the men. Of the women every one seemed the best dancer, but Hawthorne took a special pleasure in watching Angelica Recalde with Desiderio Mayorga. They were manifestly rapt in a halo of happiness which irradiated both. His joy seemed to tingle from every finger-tip of his hands, perpetually waving in motions which were no part of the dance, yet harmonised with and enforced its rhythm; and her bliss appeared in the quickly recurrent, wilfully variant turns of her slim ankles.

Hawthorne smiled at the incongruities of St. John's *sala*, where around tables heaped with silver coin the fat friars, Dominicans always partners together against Franciscans, sat at their cards, while the ladies by twos and threes returned again and again to admire the saint, perhaps to light a fresh taper in place of one that had burned short, always to point and say:

"That is my ring on the little finger of his left hand—the turquoise. I offered it to *Madrina* Juana. She didn't even know I had such a ring." Or, "That is my necklace; the third one with the rubies. I hardly wanted to lend it. But one can never refuse *Comadre* Juana anything."

The Recoletanos, Hawthorne observed, did not play cards and diverted themselves by conversation only, or by eating, very moderate compared to the gorging of the Dominicans and Franciscans. Prior Baca, a sad-eyed man, very lean and sallow, asked Hawthorne whether his countrymen were not heretics, and shook his head lugubriously over Hawthorne's reply.

While still in talk with Padre Procopio, who tried to impart some comfort to one originating in a community of heretics, they were joined by that genial grass-widower, Dr. Bargas. Whereupon Padre Baca faded noiselessly away into the crowd.

Dr. Bargas puffed out his frilled shirt-front and observed, beginning under his breath, swelling to trumpet tones:

"All *Asuncianos* are barbarians, as I have told you, Don Guillermo. This characterisation, however, scarcely applies to Doña Juana, who was born in Spain. This *fiesta*, in fact, would compare very favorably with the best I ever saw at Mendoza and is even worthy of comparison with the exquisite hospitalities of my good friend, the noble Marquis de Torretagle de Lima."

He continued, in a torrent of verbiage, recapitulating all his stock praises of Mendoza, his wife, his children, his vineyard, his wine and his friends.

After escaping from Dr. Bargas, Hawthorne, circulating at random and observing, noted an almost universal tendency to circulation, by no means at random, and speedily divined that a full half of the gentry of Asuncion were engaged in the effort to pass, without attracting Francia's notice, one or another of the three doors of the small *sala* in which he stood, and to cast furtive glances at him in converse with Ventura. Hawthorne realised with a sort of shock that Ventura and the Dictator had stood talking together while he had watched Doña Pancha eat her very liberal fill of an amazing assortment of viands and also during Dr. Bargas' lengthy harangue; yet neither scholar nor Señorita seemed weary or aware of being watched and commented upon.

Commented upon they were and liberally.

"Never talked that long to any woman in his life!"

"She's doing her full share of the talking, herself!"

"Never saw him smile that way, even at Petrona!"

"Acts as if she were sixty!"

"Acts as if he were twenty-six, you mean!" were among the comments that reached Hawthorne's ears.

Beltran caught his eye and beckoned to him with a glance.

His entry into the small *sala* broke the spell.

"Dear me!" he heard Francia remark. "You must tell me more of this. This is most interesting. But I have kept you standing too long. Have you had supper? Nor have I. Let us go together."

And, offering her his arm, he passed out of the *sala* and into the supper-room as unconsciously as if he had been any *paysito* of the unimportant herd conveying his country sweetheart.

As unconsciously they supped, oblivious to the interest they excited, to the remarks made on them, Ventura, indeed, talking her full share.

While the two ate, the well-mannered gentry kept the tables just full enough for them not to feel isolated, just not full enough for them to feel intruded upon. Hawthorne had already admired the subtlety of deftness with which the glancing at them through the doors had not been overdone; this tacit league of unspoken general comprehension and immediate collective action without the exchange of a single word impressed him even more with the capacity of the Paraguayan-Spaniards for intrigue of all sorts.

(2)

When Francia led Ventura from the supper room he remarked:

"I must see you dance some of those strange dances you describe."

In fact, as soon as Beltran could be found, the Dictator stood aside with Doña Juana and watched the first waltz ever danced in Asuncion, for waltz-music had already reached Paraguay, and the band of the Franciscan Convent was equal to several different waltz tunes.

Don Manuel's flame-coloured velvet coat harmonised with his wife's dark blue ball-gown; Beltran's pale blue silk con-

trusted perfectly with Ventura's yellow satin. The two couples made an extremely graceful spectacle.

The Dictator was pleased and remarked to his hostess:

"It seems a charming innovation. But I marvel they can appear so supple in those confining stays. I have read that they are universal at European courts and have seen many pictures of women so supported, but I could not have conjectured that they would be so becoming."

If the Dictator was pleased the old ladies were not, nor the young ladies either. Most of them were terribly shocked and scandalised. That a man should embrace his wife before a company and spin round to music seemed indelicate; that a young gallant and a *señorita*, and they not affianced, should clasp each other and revolve to the strains of a band appeared monstrous and horrifying.

But some were curious. Paraguayans of those days were all natural singers and dancers, quick to catch a new tune or a new step, and a minority of the young folks, by no means a small minority, were eager to try the novelty.

When Ventura paused, their excited arguments completely engrossed them. Naturally, they could not intrude upon Ventura or Beltran, who stopped dancing near the Dictator and stood talking to him.

But the entire faction fairly mobbed Don Manuel and Doña Juanita. Don Manuel was already intimate with every one in Asuncion. His wife had so charming a nature and so graceful an exterior that everybody felt confidential with her at first meeting. The two were fairly overwhelmed with questions. So totally did they absorb everybody's attention that Francia, Ventura, Beltran, Doña Juana and Hawthorne passed almost unnoticed into the same small *sala* where the Dictator had held his impromptu reception.

There he cross-questioned Beltran and Ventura concerning some places and people they had both seen.

"And you are going at once to San Bernardino?" he asked Ventura.

"I am in haste to see my dear father," Ventura told him. "I shall have to sleep all day to-morrow, of course, but I mean to set out Saturday morning, though *Madrina* wants me to stay until Monday."

"Even if you do," Francia remarked, "I can hardly hope to see you again. That must be my excuse for taking

up so much of your time from the gaieties you naturally crave. But your fellow-traveller here will be within reach. I must see you often, Don Beltran. Come to see me at the Government House on Saturday, if you can, or on Monday, at latest. I must hear more of your experiences."

He turned to his hostess.

"Juana," he said, "you have given me the only really gay evening I have spent in more than twenty years. You have renewed my youth. I thank you from my heart. I have enjoyed myself completely. But I must not enjoy myself overmuch. I cannot remain until sunrise, like most of the revellers. It is near midnight now and time for me to be asleep. Besides, I want to finish my ride before the eclipse begins, which will be about one hour after midnight. Altogether it is time for me to go. But I do not want to disturb your other guests. They will think it necessary to suspend their feasting and dancing to show me honour at my departure. So I will ask Don Beltran here to notify Garmendia to be ready with his men just beyond the shrubberies by the corner of the *potrero*. Then when he returns I shall slip out quietly and ride away without interrupting your guests' revelries."

While Beltran was on his errand Francia kept Hawthorne and Doña Juana with him and so conversed that they had their share in his talk with Ventura.

On Beltran's return he again thanked the delighted and amazingly youthful octogenarian and briefly bade Ventura farewell. Then he asked Hawthorne, in the most natural tone imaginable, to accompany him and Beltran.

They stepped out of the open, low-silled window, and crossed the lawn, apparently attracting no remark. Francia, listening to Beltran, had slipped an arm through his. Hawthorne on the other side of him was walking a little in front of them.

The moonlight, for the moon was now high, brilliantly illuminated the open spaces, but there were dark patches among the shrubberies.

Out of one of these, when already they were close to the waiting lancers, rushed a young man, a long, thin rapier in his hand.

He came silent as a shadow, swift as a hawk.  
Straight at Francia's breast he lunged.

"This for Narciso!" he shrilled.

His appearance was so sudden, so unexpected, that neither Francia nor Beltran made any movement to avoid or ward off the thrust.

Hawthorne hurled himself on the assassin. His fist shot out against his jaw.

At the same instant, as his knuckles felt the impact, he heard the grit of steel on steel; heard the rapier-blade snap.

The miscreant went down flat on the grass.

Two of the lancers, who had been watching the Dictator's approach and had seen the slim figure start out of the bushes, flung themselves on him before he could rise.

"Are you hurt?" was the simultaneous exclamation of Francia and Hawthorne; Hawthorne addressing the Dictator, the Dictator addressing Beltran.

It was Beltran who answered.

"I think not; the point caught in my sword-guard, I fancy."

He shook himself, felt himself, and reported:

"Not a scratch."

He picked up the two pieces of the snapped sword.

Francia turned to Hawthorne.

"That makes twice, Don Guillermo," he said crisply.

At this juncture Bopí came softly out of the shadows, knelt down, and fastened on Francia's spurs. As softly he vanished mulewards.

The foiled avenger, when lifted from the grass, was manifestly, even in the moonlight, a close relative of the handsome guitarist and of his executed brother.

"Lopezés uninvited!" was Francia's first comment. He added:

"Not your fault, Don Beltran, nor yet your grandmother's, I know. She cannot picket her grounds and could not spoil her *fiesta* with precautions for my safety, even if any of us had foreseen what we never so much as dreamed of."

Then he stood a moment and sighed.

"It is a pity to shoot all of so handsome a family. Preciado got himself shot three years ago; Narciso last Tuesday, and now Agustin on Friday. Tie him up, Fulano, and let Ramon and Pablo take him to the cavalry dungeons.



Put him in the second cell. Remind me to have him shot in the morning."

To Beltran and Hawthorne he said gravely:

"Nobody except ourselves must know of this. Fulano, of course, will hold his tongue. So will the men. It lies between us three. Give no hint of it to any one, even when you hear people vilify me for having a harmless and innocent idler shot out of mere cruelty and love of despotic power."

He bade Beltran farewell, with many compliments on the *fiesta* and on his exploits; bade Hawthorne farewell, thanking him again; glanced at the soldiers busy with their prisoner, gazed leisurely about him, stared up at the moon and then mounted as if nothing had happened.

Beltran, with Hawthorne, watched him ride off in the moonlight, his horse at a walk, four lancers in front of him, four behind. At the road they broke into a smart canter.

Meanwhile Captain Garmendia superintended his men pinioning the assassin and lashing him on a horse, which one of them brought from the stable. They also diminished under the moonrays, the Captain spurring to catch up with the Dictator, the four lancers, two on either side of their prisoner, who had uttered no word after his vain threat, riding slowly. After they were out of sight Beltran and Hawthorne returned to the house.

(3)

Inside they found all who could crowd into the larger *sala* intent upon the subject of waltzing. One Paraguayan had caught the waltz step already, for Don Saturnino Bedoya, that gigantic canary, was waltzing, and waltzing perfectly, even exquisitely, with Ventura, who was manifestly enjoying herself and plainly proud of her apt pupil. Her figure, tall and full-blooded as she was, looked very small beside his almost seven feet of height. The four shades of yellow of her gown and his costume made a singularly agreeable harmony.

When the air came to an end some one in the throng of onlookers called out:

"To teach the waltz no pretty girl need waste  
Much time on any man of sense and taste.  
Her drill, unlike his arm, won't go to waist."

A burst of laughter and applause greeted this sally. The moment the noise died away another voice capped the first with:

"It's plain the moment that you see them twirl  
Why any lass could teach a man this whirl;  
I wonder if a man could teach a girl?"

Beltran, so urged, gave but one glance about him and at once advanced to Angelica Recalde. To Hawthorne's amazement she caught the step almost immediately.

This greatly pleased everybody, even the censorious old *beatas*, Desiderio Mayorga alone excepted. He glowered from a corner, his eyes less on the feet of the dancers than on the softness of Angelica's corsetless waist against Beltran's encircling arm.

The least fascinated of the onlookers was Hawthorne, who alone had seen waltzing before. He slipped out into the moonlight and stood gazing at the dancing peasantry. Their gaiety, by mere contrast, led him to think of Cecilia, asleep, or perhaps unable to sleep, in her hut in the prison courtyard. He stood staring up at the moon that shone not only on this happy revelry, but also on her wretchedness.

When he returned to the house he entered the small *sala* and there encountered Don Gumesindo Estagarribia, greatly agitated. He puffed out a bosom almost as befrilled as Dr. Bargas' and a great deal fatter, popped his eyes, puffed and uttered:

"Most unaccountable, or, in other words, inexplicable, that is to say, puzzling. I am unable, or to make myself clear, I cannot find, or, to put it shortly, discover, or in a word, come upon our master, or to express myself better our ruler, that is to say, our Dictator. He is gone; in short, not to be found, or to sum up, he has vanished. This is most perplexing, or I might say, terrifying, even, to convey my idea to you, confusing."

Hawthorne, marvelling that any man could use so many long words where a few short words would do better, told

him of the manner of Francia's departure and of the reasons he had given for slipping off.

"That, is like his considerateness or, to express it in other words, consonant with his kind-heartedness, or to make myself clearer, in accord with his benevolence, that is to say, concordant with his benignity."

Hawthorne felt his head, a very steady head, fairly swim at this cascade of verbosity.

Don Gumesindo, taking a deep breath, launched into a prolix discourse the purport of which was entirely incomprehensible to Hawthorne, who was unable, in fact, to pay any heed to the meaning of the sentences, so absorbed was he in noting their peculiarity. For Estagarribia's rhetorical idiosyncrasies amounted to a disease, from which, apparently, he suffered more severely, the simpler the idea to be expressed. He never seemed satisfied with enunciating a conception once, but appeared to think it necessary to repeat each idea under as many different forms of expression as he could think up.

"I am enraptured at meeting you, Señor Don Guillermo," he went on, "that is to say, I am ecstaticised; or, in other words, transported, to put it more clearly, enchanted, or, so to say, beatified; if you take my meaning, overjoyed, or, to put it briefly, pleased; that is to say, glad!"

Hawthorne felt dazed, felt a numbness creeping over him, like the helplessness of a bird before a snake.

Don Gumesindo beamed down at him as if he had enunciated some vast and newly discovered truth or formulated for the first time the explanation of a baffling problem.

He continued:

"I feel this ravishment, this beatitude, this felicity, if you understand me, Señor Don Guillermo; this delight, to express the idea succinctly; this delectation, to be more lucid; this gratification, in short, this enjoyment, this pleasure, if I make myself intelligible; this satisfaction; because, Señor Don Guillermo, such a fortunate encounter between a native of our glorious continent and a native of your illustrious continent gives me the opportunity to compare, that is to say, to institute a comparison between, or in other words to contrast, or to so express it, to collate, the contrasting, or differing characters produced by the land of pampas and the land of prairies.

"Your nature, Señor Don Guillermo, is northern; that is to say, Boreal; or, in other words, arctic; or to put it shortly, septentrional, while ours, Señor Don Guillermo, is southern, or to make myself clear, antarctic, to come nearer the idea, Austral, or, to put it into one word, adjacent to the southern cross. This, Señor Don Guillermo, is the essence, the essentialness, the intrinsicity of the difference, by which I mean the dissimilarity, or, more exactly, the unlikeness, that is to say, the contrast between our respective dispositions.

"Do I make myself clear, or, in short, lucid, Señor Don Guillermo?"

"Perfectly!" Hawthorne exclaimed, and endeavoured to escape.

In vain.

For Don Gumesindo, at intolerable length, it is true, and by many circumlocutions, proceeded to make himself entirely clear on one matter, namely, that he regarded Hawthorne as the Dictator's prime favourite for the time being and thought him precisely the right person to prefer a small request which he, Don Gumesindo, had found no opportunity to lay before the supreme head of the government.

Before Estagarribia had driven home to his own satisfaction the point of this request, he gradually dropped his voice almost to a whisper and his victim became aware that they were talking in a room which was rapidly filling up.

This was the beginning for Hawthorne of an amazing experience. Standing where Francia had stood, he found himself the focus of a homage almost as universal and held, without expecting it, a reception nearly as inclusive. No sooner had the company learned that Francia had departed than all the gentlemen and most of the ladies crowded in to make Hawthorne's acquaintance; or, if they had already met him, to make some complimentary remark. Except the members of the Mayorga household, every man present had some request to prefer, had some matter to present which he wished the newcomer to bring to the Dictator's attention. The ladies, born intriguers all, were not behind their men-folk in self-seeking. Hawthorne was impressed with the subtlety with which most of them, men

and women alike, put forth their suggestions. 'Also, he was more than a little disgusted at the time-serving mob. Only General Cabañas, Don Prudencio la Guardia, and the two Casals had no request to make, no petition to further. Even Don Cipriano Doméque had interests at the Government House which he thought Hawthorne might further.

Release came to Hawthorne when some one passed word about that the moon was in process of being eclipsed. To view this portent, all flocked out of doors, Hawthorne with them. When satisfied with gazing, commenting and remarking on the infallibility of *Carai* Francia's predictions, most of the company again flocked indoors, Hawthorne found himself free to roam about and observe the slackening festivities. Except that all the children were now asleep and some of their elders, the slackening was observable only to a keen eye. Out of doors the peasantry danced with abandon and ate with insatiable appetite. Indoors, St. John leered from his crystal case, the friars shuffled and played their cards and pushed the heaps of silver coins across the green baize tables. In the largest *sala*, waltzing had found many converts, Don Gil Romero and Don Arturo Balaguer among them; each, Hawthorne observed, waltzing with his own wife. Ventura was again partner with Don Saturnino Bedoya, who was plainly head over ears in love with her. Beltran was dancing with Doña Melchora Echagüe, while Desiderio Mayorga, entirely happy, was waltzing with Angelica Recalde.

In the smaller *sala* the national dance, the *sarandig*, the figures of which carried the performer's feet some distance from the floor, was being danced with much enthusiasm and vigour. To Hawthorne's amazement his aged hostess was exhibiting her skill and displaying an agility, grace and stamina downright superhuman.

At length, the daylight overcame the radiance of the disappearing moon. The peasantry began to disperse, their guitars twanging faintly and farther off as they trooped away. The friars tore themselves away from their cards, the Dominicans with all the silver, the Franciscans impoverished to the last *maravedi*, each order looking daggers at the other. The dancing ceased. The nurses began gathering up the children and Dr. Bargas shook, and shook in

vain, good old Tom Parlett of Bristol, dead drunk in a corner of the dining hall. The mothers looked after their daughters, all a bit wan in the dawn light, the wives waked up their husbands, the gentlemen roused their servants and urged them towards the *potrero*. By sunrise most of the cattle were yoked and all the horses saddled. Coffee and chocolate were handed about, as well as *maté* without limit, the servants bustled, the vehicles moved off, troops of cavaliers galloped hallooing to every point of the compass; the friars took the road in a long procession, the bands jogged off, the caravans of ladies and children creaked away.

Hawthorne and Carmelo, whom he had seen but once all night, cantered up to the Mayorga mansion after eight o'clock of the day. Ten minutes after he dismounted, Hawthorne was fast asleep.

## CHAPTER XIX

## THE INSTALMENT

## (1)

WHEN he awoke, the day was already far along toward evening. No sooner was he astir than a knock sounded on the door. At his response his host entered and told him that a message had come for him. The worthy don was agog over its wording. The messenger had not said:

"El Supremo orders Don Guillermo Atorno to come and see him"; but,

"The Dictator begs that Don Guillermo Atorno come to the Government House at his leisure and convenience."

The messenger had even been charged most strictly that Don Guillermo must not be wakened or disturbed.

"You are indeed high in favour," Don Vicente declared, using that phrase for the twentieth time, at least. "You are invited to sup with the Dictator or not, as you please, and the messenger is waiting, as he was bidden."

"I am not a bit hungry," Hawthorne replied. "Pigeon

and wine will be enough supper for me. I feel as if I had but just swallowed the last of my share of Doña Juana's good cheer."

At the Government House his experiences were at first a repetition of those of the preceding Tuesday evening. Bopî squatting by the sentry, the flowered calico dressing gown, the delayed supper, the invitation into the study, were all similar.

But the moment they were in the study Francia motioned Hawthorne to a chair, pulled another close to him, and took his seat on it.

"You will eat with more relish," he said, "after we have talked a bit. You are aware, Don Guillermo, that you have twice saved my life. All Paraguay, without suspecting the fact, is doubly indebted to you. Part of that debt or at least an instalment on it, I must endeavour to pay.

"I am called a tyrant. I forget what witty French writer defined a tyrant as a ruler who endeavours to make his people happy by giving them what he considers good for them, instead of what they want, and then wonders why they are not pleased.

"I shall not act like a tyrant towards you, Don Guillermo. In so far as I can, I shall fulfil your wishes. You are, I perceived the other day, deeply interested in my most interesting prisoner.

"I tried to make it plain to you, I repeat now most solemnly, that I cannot so much as consider releasing that unfortunate lady. It is my duty to Paraguay to detain her. Her freedom I cannot accord you. But if there is anything short of release which you desire done for her, which you can think of, it shall be freely permitted. Think the matter over during our supper, formulate your requests, and state them to me before we part to-night."

At that moment Bopî announced supper.

As they stood up, Francia asked suddenly:

"Were you thinking of me when you saved my life, or did you act before you thought, like a man slapping a mosquito?"

Hawthorne laughed, and then fell serious.

"I did not think at all," he confessed. "I saw a fellow-creature in peril, and, each time, my New England instincts acted before I myself realised what I was doing."

"Your New England instincts," Francia snorted, "also prompt you to tell the truth!"

When they were seated at table, Francia proposed:

"Let us talk in French. I am vain of my command of French and seldom have any one with whom I can keep myself in practice."

In the French therefore they conversed, the Dictator compellingly and charmingly keeping Hawthorne busy by a series of questions about North America; its products, agriculture and trade; its public men, education, proficiency in mechanical arts, mathematical training; so leading to talk about eclipses and other non-contentious topics.

When the simple meal was finished, the table cleared and their cigars drawing, Francia with one of his sudden turns spoke in Spanish and came to the point:

"Wednesday afternoon you had saved my life but once; now you have saved me twice. I feel that we are bound to each other, not only I to you by having been saved, but you to me by having saved me. Certainly I am, in many senses, bound to you. I shall not again give way to suspicion towards you. Be sure of that.

"Now I ask you, not as I asked you for your probably ready suggestions, day before yesterday, but in quite a different spirit, to state to me frankly your real opinion of my prisons. I ask it as a favour."

Hawthorne puffed his cigar.

"In Buenos Aires," he said, "I heard dark rumours of the horrors of your prisons. People spoke of them almost in whispers. They repeated absurd legends of dungeons belonging to the Inquisition, to the Jesuits, ingeniously and fiendishly devised. Similar bogey tales were told me at Santa Fé and Corrientes.

"I find no basis for such inventions. Your public prison is less crowded and less filthy than the prison at Buenos Aires. It is similar to others I have seen in South America. At Pamplona I saw smaller cells far more crowded. At Cartagena the conditions were still worse.

"As for the dungeons, yours have in each set a window at the end of the corridor. In Cartagena the dungeons were dungeons indeed, cut out of the solid rock, without aperture of any kind. Not one of your dungeon cells is under six feet square. At Pamplona a turnkey opened a cell



before me. It was six feet high, four feet wide and two feet deep. The prisoner had been in it two months, during which time the door had been opened but once daily and then only to put in a jug of water and some food. Yet the man was alive.

"I find no such conditions in Asuncion. Compared with South American prisons in general, yours are above the average."

"Very discreetly expressed," Francia commented, "and very gratifying to me to hear. Yet all that sounds to me like a mere prelude to a positive censure. You have more to say; speak it out."

Thus encouraged, Hawthorne launched freely into a discourse on prisons in general, winding up with an application to the prisons of Asuncion in particular.

Francia threw away what was left of his cigar, lit another, and insisted on his guest doing likewise.

"It is clarifying to the mind," he said, "to listen to you, if only that it forces one to formulate to oneself just why one disagrees with you."

"Now you talk as if the object of the existence of prisons were the safety, health and comfort of the prisoners. It is no such thing. The chief, I might almost say the only, object of a prison's existence is to make sure that the prisoners do not get away. Keep that in mind."

"I do keep it in mind," Hawthorne said. "But after that has been provided for there is no reason why offenders, whose guilt is adjudicated as not meriting execution, should suffer a death far worse than hanging or shooting after prolonged torments from unnecessary mismanagement. A delinquent judged worthy of confinement only, should only be confined; should be freed at the end of his term of imprisonment no worse off in health than when cast into prison. Criminals dangerous to the community should be ruthlessly abolished. Those whose sentence is in the nature of deterrent correction or warning, and who are to be released and again become part of the community, should not be disabled or made invalids; that is merely depriving the public of their future services and burdening their acquaintances with the care of them. Their value to the nation should not be impaired by confinement. Detention in this climate is punishment enough and should not be

aggravated by preventable miseries. Mere prisoners should really be kept as healthy and comfortable as is possible under local conditions."

Francia scowled, sighed and smiled.

"You are a very eloquent young man," he said, "and your command of Spanish is astonishing when you are roused. You carry one with you against his will, even when you go wrong. But you never go entirely wrong, and sometimes you touch the core of the matter you discuss. Your last few words are very much to the point. The kind of prisons you dream of may come into being on earth at some future time: I cannot credit that such ever yet existed. The sort of prisons you tell of may exist in Europe or America. You yourself confess that there are worse on this continent. The ideal prisons you bid me aim at may yet come into being in Paraguay, but not this year, hardly in this century.

"Our prisons are conditioned not only by the climate, building-methods in vogue, as well as the food products and clothing-supplies available, not merely by the structure of our polity and personalities of our police, constable and jailers: they are still more conditioned by the natures of our prisoners. Your ideal prisons are here and now impossible.

"Come, I am not a particle incensed with you. But let us abandon fruitless talk of generalities and theories. Let us particularise only. Consider that I grant your airiest assumptions and admit the justice of your arguments; on that basis let us be severely practical. What specific recommendations have you to make for those improvements in the healthfulness of my prisoners and economy of my prison administration, for I think you dwelt on economy in your theorising? State your suggestions. I shall listen."

"In the first place," Hawthorne said, "you can apply one generalisation towards both health and economy by merely making as universal and continuous as possible what is done capriciously and intermittently. I was told that some of the prisoners were sometimes taken from the prison under guard to work outside. Every man capable of work should be at work outside every morning and afternoon, weather permitting. Every woman should be made to work every day, all day except at the siesta hour."

"How?" Francia queried, startled.

"At spinning or weaving," Hawthorne replied. "Spinning-wheels and looms could be installed cheaply, cotton supplied. The products would soon pay for the cost of looms and all and thenceforth would yield a profit. Gomez could be trusted to audit the amount of cotton brought in and cloth produced and to see that the wheels and looms are not harmed. He could also be left to choose one woman to direct the others and two to assist her. The work would keep them all healthy and as nearly contented as prisoners can be."

"A good idea!" Francia cried. "I'll try it. Cloth is always scarce here and extremely costly. Moreover, the experiment will cost less than you forecast. Spinning-wheels in Paraguay are used only by the wealthiest ladies who have some education. All other women use mere spindles."

He lit a fresh cigar.

"How," he enquired, "do you propose to occupy the men?"

"I was told they worked at wood-sawing and at loading and unloading cargoes," Hawthorne said. "Those are fit tasks for criminals and prisoners. But vessels do not every day require loading and unloading at Asuncion. Nor is the demand for planks great or continuous."

"But putting streets in order and paving is the best possible work for prisoners. It is not ruinous to their health, yet is disagreeable enough to be punitive, and the need for street betterment is everywhere in Asuncion. You could pave Calle Comercio to begin with, and continue at your fancy."

"That I'll try also," Francia agreed, rubbing his hands. "Any other suggestion?"

"Some delinquents," Hawthorne enunciated slowly, "are better chastised by fine than confinement."

"Orpheus speaks, I conjecture," Francia said. "The utterance is vague and indefinite."

"When you imprison a man," Hawthorne queried, "is it an act of revenge on him, or to vindicate the majesty of the law, restrain him and others like him from repeating the offence, and protect the nation from the consequences of acts and words that should be repressed?"

Francia fidgeted.

"I fear," he said, "I have permitted you too much license toward myself. I find I am restive under your catechising. However, I shall not go back on my given word. I reply, like a school-boy at fault. I am often revengeful in the heat of indignation, and afterwards regret it. I despise revengefulness when I am cool. As policy, it is despicable, as weakness contemptible. Punishment should aim at the ends you have recited, at no others."

"Then," Hawthorne spoke boldly, "the interests of Paraguay would be better served by releasing after payment of a large fine, than by further detaining Don Cristobal de Maria."

Francia stood up, livid and snorting.

Hawthorne's eyes never left his.

He sat down again and took a huge pinch of snuff.

"A fine," Hawthorne said, "large enough to make him smart, but not large enough to impoverish him, would be a sufficiently severe punishment to any loose-mouthed old Spaniard and would be an effectual deterrent to any other similarly minded."

Francia took another pinch of snuff.

"I find," he said, "to my surprise, that I positively enjoy opposition from you. It is a refreshing novelty. In plain words, you beg for the release of Don Cristobal."

"Did you talk to him? Yes? How much of a fine could his estate stand?"

"You ought to know that better than I," Hawthorne replied.

"I'd wager he told you," Francia declared. "And I am disposed to indulge you to the utmost. I shall let him off at his own offer, which is doubtless one-half what he could afford."

"Two thousand pesos," Hawthorne said, "was what he mentioned."

"Show me," Francia said, "Olegario's receipt for two thousand *piastres* paid into the treasury, and I'll give you an order authorising his wife to go to the prison and have his fetters filed off and take him home with her."

Hawthorne expressed his thanks at some length.

"You talk much of economy," Francia interrupted him, "but of some things you are anything but economical: of

thanks, for instance. And you are positively wasteful of arguments. Why argue with me about Don Cristobal's case when I would have released him as a favour to you without discussion?"

Hawthorne, as usual, met Francia's eyes full.

"If my presentation of the case did not convince you," he said, "of the advisability of commuting the residue of Don Cristobal's allotted period of detention for a cash fine, he ought not to be released. No man ought to be released as a favour to another."

Francia sighed.

"My views exactly," he said. "You must pardon me if I have lost sight of my own principles in the atmosphere which has produced, say, Don Gregorio de la Cerda. In some moods one comes to feel that favouritism rules all mankind, even oneself.

"It does, to a degree.

"It was favouritism to listen to your pleadings. I should have so favoured no other human being. But, on the other hand, had the facts been otherwise, or had you presented them less tellingly, I should have refused even you."

He smiled again, slyly.

"Have you any arguments," he asked, "for the release of Ramon Perez?"

"Not one," said Hawthorne. "He and Asuncion are alike better off while he is in duress."

"Am I to hear any pleadings in behalf of my precious nephews?" Francia queried.

"None," said Hawthorne.

"Why not?" Francia shot at him.

"I thought they both lied," Hawthorne answered steadily.

"Neither could help lying if he tried to tell the truth," Francia chuckled. "Neither is capable of trying to tell the truth. You read them!

"What opinion did you form about the other occupants of the dungeons?" he queried.

"I formed no opinion about them or any one of them," Hawthorne replied. "I contented myself with the general inference that they were politically dangerous, too dangerous to be at large, but not guilty of any specific act that would justify execution."

"You have put the facts precisely," said the Dictator, taking a big pinch of snuff, and another bigger.

Hawthorne already knew Francia's habits, and recognised symptoms of satisfaction. He saw an opportunity, and improved it.

"I was puzzled," he said, "as to why Padre Taboada was not in the dungeons rather than in the public prison."

"He ought to be in his grave," Francia retorted. "But then, not even Espinosa would have shot a friar. And my Creoles, if anything, reverence all clergymen and semi-clergy more even than did the old Spaniards, which is too much. My Guaranies revere them, almost worship them. I dare not shoot a friar, at least I dared not shoot one five years ago, and have not dared yet. To put a friar in a dungeon would have been almost as bad as killing him, in its effect on the Guaranies."

Hawthorne nodded.

"I was also curious," he added, "about Felicien Abendano."

"No mystery about him," Francia rejoined. "Disloyalty to me has never appeared among my Guaranies except that stirred up by two brothers, of whom he is one. The other is at large, or dead. I'd cheerfully shoot Felicien if I were sure of his brother's death. Until I am, or capture him, I'll keep this imitator close and that other, Bernardino Zapidas, about whom you are probably equally curious. He tried to do among the *costeros* of the salt marshes what the Abendanos were attempting in the northeast from Voquita to Forquilha and beyond both. He called himself generalissimo to Count Galicien le Fort, Marquis des Guaranies. That is the way these lackeys mixed up French titles with their talk of universal equality. Have you any more questions?"

"I was also curious about Don Rodrigo Valta," Hawthorne continued.

"That faded popinjay!" Francia exclaimed. "That brings us back to something I passed over on Wednesday afternoon.

"I told you that between Dalmacio's and Domingo's attempts on my life several others had narrowly failed. Valta's failed by a wide margin. He was a second emissary from the honourable Portefios to compass my annihi-

lation, sent during the year of the joint consulate and fool enough to disclose his plans to Fulgencio. Yegros is ten times a dolt, but he is honest, and he told me at once.

"Since then Don Rodrigo has been where you saw him.

"Since the second convention and my elevation to the Dictatorship, I have detected more plots for my assassination than I should care to narrate.

"One in particular I will describe, as you have seen the prisoners it has entrapped into my prisons.

"Fully a year ago, I was warned that Don Estéban Maria Perrichon, Postmaster General of Corrientes, had a plan on foot to compass my death. The two brothers Chilaber had volunteered to kill me, and had themselves outlined a plausible scheme, to which I should certainly have fallen a victim had I not been forewarned. They came in one of their own ships with a cargo of general merchandise; most attractive and salable commodities. There were some discrepancies between the description of the lading in the ship's papers and the nature of the bales and packages found on the ship, a dispute naturally arose between the customs-inspector and the importers. One of the brothers, just as naturally, proceeded to ask for an audience with me, to refer the matter to my decision.

"He had his face under better control than Pai Dalmacio had had. But for the explicit and repeated warnings I had received from Corrientes I should never have suspected him. As it was, I had my sabre at my side. I am no slow or unskilled fencer. I felt ashamed to doubt so courtly a young gentleman, to show fear of such a mere lad. I kept my eye on the hilt of his hanger, ready for any movement of his hand towards it, and let him talk.

"His account of himself, of his intentions, of his difficulties, was so plausible that I was beginning to doubt the discretion or the good-faith of my correspondents in Corrientes, when he made as if to produce some documents from the inner pocket of his coat.

"His face and hand seemed not just precisely as they would have been had he had only documents in that pocket. But, unwarned, I should never have noticed the fine shade of difference.

"I called Iturbe. Chilaber was pinioned and searched.

"He had a long poniard inside his coat. Naturally I

had him cast into the cell where you saw him, and confiscated their *polacca* and cargo. As the younger brother had been a mere passive accomplice, I merely sent him to the public prison. You have undoubtedly heard the rest of the story."

"I have," Hawthorne agreed. "But what I do not comprehend is why both brothers were not shot at once, or at least Don Diego; or why, if not put to death, they were imprisoned at all. If not guilty, they should be free; if guilty, they surely should be executed."

Francia's face wore an expression compounded of many conflicting feelings. It was grave, quizzical, tolerant and haughty all at one and the same time.

"It is so easy," he said, "to think and talk of having suspects shot when you do not yourself have to determine the degree of guilt and order the execution. If you ever come yourself into such a position of responsibility and authority, you will feel and speak very differently. Do you recall the passage in Tacitus where he tells how the Emperor Tiberius remarked bitterly that no one save the sovereign himself ever believed in the reality of a plot to kill a sovereign unless that plot succeeded?"

"No," Hawthorne replied. "I have read Tacitus, but I have no memory of the passage."

"Perhaps it is Suetonius," Francia ruminated, "or told of Domitian. Anyhow, it is pertinent to my difficulties. If I am sure a man ought to be shot, I have him shot precisely like Espinosa and Larrazabal or any Intendente before me. But if I have no actual proofs, I hesitate. I have no proofs against these men. I cannot betray my faithful henchmen in Buenos Aires, Santa Fé or Corrientes. If I shoot them, all men, even my devoted Guaranies, will feel, might even say, that I am acting as a suspicious tyrant. Even in my own heart I doubt. Diego did not actually aim at me the weapon he carried into my presence. There were Catalans in the crew of the *polacca*, and no men on earth are more quarrelsome, vindictive and treacherous. One or more might have had a grudge against Diego. He might have feared a cowardly attack. Knowing how craftily Catalans creep up on a victim and how suddenly they pounce, he may have provided himself with a quickly drawn poniard inside his coat, knowing they



would watch his hanger only. My informants down river may have been enemies of the Chilabers, or over-zealous or deceived.

"No; to order a man shot I must be very sure indeed. As to most I feel that God gave them life, it is for Him to take it away. It is enough for me to hinder them from doing mischief."

"You apply that to the Chilabers?" Hawthorne queried.

"Precisely," Francia answered.

"Then consider," Hawthorne solemnly declared, "that you are killing them yourself as positively as if you ordered them shot. Diego is wasting away. Alberto has a sabre-cut over the forehead which will surely gangrene in that dungeon. He has a fever. Neither will live a week."

"That is like Dominguez," Francia exclaimed. "He is the prison-surgeon and supposed to examine every prisoner daily. He uniformly reports all well. To make sure, I have Narvaez, the barrack surgeon, inspect the prisons weekly. He went over them Wednesday and reported no serious cases of any kind. I am hemmed in by fools or incompetents or liars on all sides."

"What do you want me to do?"

"At least," Hawthorne replied, "you might let me take in a doctor with some sense and capacity."

"At most," said Francia, "if you had your way, what should I be granting?"

"That they be taken out of the dungeon, put under guard, on any one of the vessels the embargo keeps at anchor in the harbour and tended till they are out of immediate danger."

"You ought to have sense enough to realise," Francia retorted, with a tinge of his worst snarl in his tone, "that I do not confine in dungeons any except men who ought to be there."

"I assume that for all the others," said Hawthorne boldly. "But you yourself have expounded to me the Chilabers' case and the unreason of their further confinement in dungeons. They are no political menace to you like Felicien Abendano; no insidious disseminators of plotting like Rodrigo Valta. They would do no mischief if released. There is not the smallest chance of either again attempting your life. Their experiences, if known, would

act as a powerful deterrent upon any rashly meditating a similar attempt. I not only ask you to accede to the plea I have put in for them, but counsel you to let me intimate to them that they will be permitted to return to Corrientes upon agreeing to the forfeiture of their vessel and cargo as a fine."

"Humph!" said Francia. "You have a tongue! Take them a doctor, but not Don Arsenio Dominguez. Better Parlett drunk than old Dominguez sober. Have them out and put them on Zelaya's little smack: I'll set Ortellado to guard them. He can be trusted. I'll write the necessary orders. And I'll think over the idea of releasing them. It might do no harm. Sometimes a man gets cramp of the determination, so to speak. I might have seen all this long ago, for myself. Are all New Englanders, like you, a sort of mental tonic?"

"Perhaps," Hawthorne smiled. "I had no idea I was anything like that."

"You are," Francia affirmed. "And, speaking of you, that brings me back to the beginning of our talk. I believe I have now contracted for as large an instalment of my debt to you as it would be well to pledge myself for at this time. As to the first item of it, what are your wishes as to the lady in the hut?"

Hawthorne explained.

"I'm almost ashamed for the ladies of Asuncion," Francia commented, "and half ashamed of myself. Yet they are right in their dread of offending me, and I was right to inspire it. You can form no idea of how I was pestered by the women relations of every man I arrested until I impressed it on them that bothering me ensured greater severity towards the prisoner and the sternest chilliness towards themselves and all their relatives. Then they let me alone. But I had to exaggerate my exasperation and seem infuriated to produce any effect. They are all fools, the Paraguayans.

"But the papers I'll give you will convince the most timorous that it will be perfectly safe to abet you in relieving the lady's distress in so far as they may. Come, let us go into the study, and I'll write the papers."

When they were all written, signed and sealed, and Hawthorne held in his hands the authorisations for Don Cristo-

bal's release, for the Chilabers' transfer to an anchored and guarded brigantine, for Dr. Parlett to visit them before and after their transfer; for himself to visit Doña Cecilia as often as he pleased; for any lady of Asuncion to accompany him, provided not more than two went at once, and a separate paper in the form of an edict urging and encouraging all and any ladies of Asuncion to interest themselves in the welfare of the women prisoners in the public prison, Francia cut short Hawthorne's thanks.

"I like her spirit!" he said.

"And now," he added, in a different tone. "I have tried to oblige you, suppose you oblige me a bit. Let us have a game of chess. In here it is stuffy. There is not enough air stirring to gutter the candles much, even at the edge of the bank. Suppose we have the chess table out under the trees. What do you say?"

Hawthorne acceded, of course, and the Dictator called Bopí, who carried out the table and candles.

(2)

Saturday was a busy day for Hawthorne.

His conscience drove him to relieve the most urgent need first and to postpone his chief desire.

Sobering Dr. Parlett soon after sunrise was no small task. Lieutenant Ortellado refused to move the Chilabers till he had made as sure as possible of the smack. He removed all its sails and searched every cranny of its hold for spare canvas. He requisitioned chains from other vessels and anchored the smack with chain-cables. All of which took time.

Doña Remedios de Maria was really terrified when Hawthorne and Mayorga called upon her: the object of their visit she found altogether incredible, pinched herself to make sure she was not dreaming, and when Don Vicente convinced her of the reality of their mission, she dissolved into a flood of tears.

Doña Encarnacion was also incredulous at first, but when her fat husband, lolling coatless and waistcoatless in his armchair under his portico, chatting with the prior of the Dominicans, read the papers and affirmed their genuine-

ness; when Padre Ignacio joined him in confirming Hawthorne and Mayorga, she roused to an activity which few Massachusetts women could have surpassed.

In an hour she had ready all that she conceived likely to be needed, and with Doña Engracia accompanied Hawthorne to the prison.

He remained in the men's court, sampling Don Angel's mendacity and prevarication, until the two ladies, their eyelids visibly red and swollen, returned from the women's *patio*.

"Go to her, Don Guillermo," Doña Encarnacion said. "She wishes to thank you."

Hawthorne went, wrapped in a sort of golden haze. But as he stood in the door of the hut, his first glimpse of Cecilia's face dashed his spirits like a douse of cold water. She stood as chill and haughty as three days before.

"Señor Don Guillermo," she said, "I am told that I should thank you. I have been provided with clean and comfortable clothing, with many longed-for necessities, and even with some luxuries. I am so much better off than I was an hour ago that I cannot believe myself the same creature. I am rich compared to what I was. Above all, I have good friends in Asuncion, where an hour ago I had none. I am told I owe all this to you, and that I should thank you. But I cannot credit it. You proclaimed yourself the friend of the tyrant and high in his favour. I cannot believe that any good, any kindness to any living being, least of all to me, could come from him or any of his friends. But I shall try to believe it. Perhaps I may succeed after a time. At this time I can only say that if my succour is really due to your intervention, if what the two ladies have told me is really true, then I thank you from my heart."

Hawthorne bowed without a word and went away.

As they started homeward from the prison door, Doña Encarnacion patted him on the arm, and said:

"Your eyes are good, Don Guillermo. My *tupoi* and my stockings fitted her perfectly. She is exactly my height. But my shoes were just a trifle too small for her. That pleased my Castilian vanity."

## CHAPTER XX

## GOLD COMBS IN CHURCH

(1)

AS he had expressed a wish to go to church with the Mayorga family, Hawthorne was waked on Sunday morning when the first tints of daylight were greyly filtering through the bamboo jalousies. He dressed hurriedly and, warned by Don Vicente, ate some of the fruit and biscuits set out over night on his table.

In the big *sala* he found the family assembled. The ladies were on the *estrada*, that raised platform at the rear of the room which was the pride of every Spanish-American household. The men and young folks were standing about the main floor of the room.

Boys and men were all in their gay court-costumes, as they had been at Itapuá at the *fiesta* of St. John. Little Manrique Romero, in particular, struck now again on Hawthorne as an absurdly sedate pocket-edition of his father, his tiny personality graver and more elderly than any of the adults.

In contrast to the gaudy finery of the men and boys, the girls and ladies were completely extinguished in all-enveloping dresses of a black bombazine-like wool stuff called *bayetilla*, their heads swathed and faces concealed under *rebozos* of the same dingy material. Hawthorne noticed the differences of local meaning in the word. At Buenos Aires, as at Pamplona, a *rebozo* meant a scarf; at Santa Fé or Corrientes he had found it meant a muffler; at Asuncion a *rebozo* was a hideous hood.

The moment Hawthorne appeared, every one made ready to set out. Breakfast was to be after returning from mass, to which all, except the smaller children, went fasting, as communicants.

Outside they were joined by the Recalde clan and merged in the stream of worshippers that trickled down past the Franciscan Monastery and out of the crooked cross-streets between that and the Convent of Mercy.

The throng was all garbed like the Mayorga family, the sombrely muffled ladies and misses, their tiny shoe-tips barely discernible under their long black gowns, their heads invisible under their *rebozos*, their hands out of sight in the amplitude of their sleeves, the big black beads of their long rosaries clacking as they walked, accentuating the gala attire of their bedizened males. The white dresses of the women of inferior station in life, of the serving-women who carried the embroidered rugs on which the ladies were to kneel, and the dingy ponchos of the labourers, serving-men and slaves, threw still more into relief the butterfly gorgeousness of the male gentry.

By Calle Concepcion, the cross-street coming out between the corridored fronts of the shop-row, they reached the public square beside the tower of the Cathedral, the glory of Asuncion in 1816, which, though acknowledgedly not as fine as the famous Jesuit church at far-off little Santa Rosa, was the largest building in the country. It was plain, lengthy and rather squat. Its nave was not only long, but broad and low, the red-tiled roof low-pitched and with eaves barely projecting. The side-walls were white-washed, but much of the lime had peeled off the brick and the effect was leprous and blotchy.

Inside, the sexes were separated: men on the right, women on the left. The rear part of the church was filled with meaner folk, the women a mass of misty, glimmering white gowns and filmy white scarfs covering their hair; the men a blur of black, touzled heads above blackish-brown ponchos.

Forward from about the middle of the church knelt the gentry, filling the nave nearly to the altar-rail, the dons on the bare brick floor, like their inferiors, the ladies on bright rugs. Near the altar-rail was an empty space, in which were set, three on each side, six *tarimas*. These were low platforms, some four feet wide and ten long and about a foot and a half high. They were intended to elevate the privileged few more than a flea-jump above the floor, and so free them from the general distraction and annoyance caused by the prevalent insects. On them knelt the civil dignitaries, Don Gumesindo, Don Olegario, Don Basilio, and the rest, on the Epistle side of the altar, before

the men, and their women-folk on the Gospel side before the ladies.

Hawthorne, against the wall by a window, though he had become acquainted with South American customs in Granada and Buenos Aires, surveyed the scene with interest. The interior of the church was gloomy, save for the blaze of candles over the main central altar and of the few before the statue of St. Joseph that faced the men and of the Madonna facing the women. The contrast of colour struck him most: behind him the smudge of dingy rabble, farthest off the white haze, as it were of their women, in front to his left the black masses of the ladies, all kneeling on both knees, their general sable tint relieved only by a few glimpses of their kneeling-rugs that showed between, or an occasional bit of white stocking showing above a barely visible heel; ahead of him, the mosaic of the jewel-tinted gentlemen's suits, all bright even in the dimness as they knelt all in the same attitude, right knee on the floor, body almost sitting on the right heel, left elbow on the left knee, jaw on the left hand, their gaudy fineries brilliant above the shine of their hundreds of white silk stockings. One or two doctors of laws, all in black, showed like bits of jet among rubies and emeralds.

Between the males and females paced solemnly that grave young seven-footer, Don Saturnino Bedoya, gorgeous in a court-suit of scarlet and gold, his gold-mounted rapier-sheath slanting from under his long coat-tails, his gold-laced, beplumed cocked hat under his arm, the big gold head of his long walking-cane level with his shoulders, his whole being a-swell with the importance of his duty to see that order and decorum prevailed (as they would have prevailed in that pious throng had he been in the moon).

Last of the gentry, even a trifle late, which hardly any one ever was in Asuncion, entered Don Manuel Bianquet and his wife, her lovely charge, Señorita Ventura Velarde, and her beaming godfather, Don Gregorio de la Cerda. Don Gregorio wore the same dove-drab coat with the many big pearl buttons, the same rainbow waistcoat, the same gold knee and shoe buckles, which had so become him at the *fiesta*. Don Manuel was all in orange satin with blue facings, flaps, pockets and cuffs. But on men such bril-

liance excited no remark in Asuncion. The ladies with them, however, were a portent at that time and in that place.

For they wore no *rebozos*, no *bayetilla*. Doña Juanita had on black satin shoes, fine ribbed white silk stockings, displaying neat, well-turned ankles below the fringe of her black satin skirt. More fringe emphasised the rather low cut of her bodice, and the beauty of her neck, covered, but not hidden, by the tasteful drapery of her black lace *mantilla*, very fine and thin and permitting a sufficient view of her face, her glossy black, exquisitely braided hair and of the tall gold comb that held it. From under it her hands showed very tiny, encased in white-kid gloves, the latest Parisian importation at Buenos Aires. They held a black lace French fan.

Ventura's garb had in it no trace of the coquettishness which radiated from Doña Juanita, and every visible thread she wore; but Ventura, insulated in serene, unconscious self-possession, was more arresting to attention than any coquette.

She was shod and hosed like her chaperon, and her similarly gloved hands carried a similar fan. Her hair comb was also of gold, her *mantilla* of antique Italian lace; her dress black lace over a pearl silk ground.

Their garb was a portent indeed; far more of a portent the unmistakable fact that both wore stays!

A corseted waist, two corseted waists in the Cathedral of Asuncion in 1816! Try to imagine the effect if the wife of a New York millionaire and the daughter of a Chicago pork-packer attended church in Omaha clad in the laced bodices, gauze skirts and pink tights of the conventional coryphées of an opera ballet! At Asuncion in 1816 the effect on the worshippers, the ladies who came to be worshippers, in the Cathedral, was similar to what would be caused by two ladies in circus rider's garb in St. Paul's, London, in our days. The pious ladies were distracted from their devotions, one after another noticed the newcomers, a ripple of whispers ran through the black-hooded, kneeling throng; there were nudgings and turnings and craning of necks; murmurs arose; acrimonious underbreath colloquies ensued; the universal buzz among the scandalised ladies amounted to a disturbance; the attention of the



priests was attracted; they were shocked at the interruption to worship and horrified at the cause, when their gaze was directed that way.

The gorgeous Bedoya suddenly found his office no sinecure. After a summons from Pai Damaso Montiel and a brief exchange of whispers with him, he had the exquisite mortification of having to approach Señorita Velarde and her chaperon and command them to leave the consecrated edifice.

Naturally they were angry. Doña Juanita was contemptuous of provincial imbecility; Ventura vexed at the fuss she had innocently caused and hurt that her spontaneous fervour should be balked of the satisfaction she had anticipated in worship and communion at her home church; Don Manuel furious and Don Gregorio in a towering rage.

Out they went, the serving-women behind them, the gaudy rugs over their arms.

Hawthorne was nearly as angry as Don Manuel or Don Gregorio, but also felt a tendency to laugh at the comical absurdity of such primitive provincialism.

He kept his peace and his place, and endeavoured to absorb himself in the mere picture the interior of the Cathedral presented, a sight sufficiently interesting.

The main picture made by church and congregation had also painted pictures inset in it: the inevitable stations of the cross and also three large canvases crowded with figures not ill painted and set in frames very broad and heavy-looking, apparently of wood carved and gilded, mostly baroque convolutions of meaningless projections and curves, but also with fruit and flowers among the scroll-work.

Edging nearer the largest of the three, as the people began to move out, Hawthorne found the painting an intelligible attempt at depicting the Last Supper; the frame an amazing construction of clipped and gilded feathers most artfully devised to resemble the ornate picture frames then fashionable in Spain; the whole as light as it looked heavy.

As the congregation streamed out of the church, Hawthorne asked Don Vicente why there was no sermon, and was informed that sermons were preached in Asuncion only in Lent.

On their way back the conversation was one continuous chatter of discussion on the subject of church-going cos-

tume for ladies, provincialism, and propriety. The Mayorgas and Recaldes, holding themselves above the generality of their townsfolk, were inclined to side with Ventura and Doña Juanita, but the ladies made reservations, being one and all habituated to *bayetilla* and *rebozos*, and every one of them horrified, horrified beyond any words of theirs to express their horror, at gold combs on ladies in church.

## (2)

Breakfast was barely over at the Mayorga mansion when in came Don Gregorio and Don Manuel, seeking Hawthorne. Don Manuel was determined that his wife should be admitted to the Cathedral and to communion there in the identical garb she had worn when expelled; and Don Gregorio was still more resolved that public reparation be made to his favourite goddaughter. They were for appealing to the Dictator, knowing that Pai Montiel would be obdurate, partly from his native obstinacy and still more from his sense of self-importance in the absence of the Bishop. They wanted Hawthorne to go with them to the Palacio and to join in the appeal. Hawthorne at once agreed to go, stipulating, however, that he was to remain entirely in the background unless his intervention was needed.

"But," Don Gregorio demurred, "Don Manuel is not in favour at the Government House, nor am I. You are in high favour, in the highest favour. If you are able to win indulgences, unheard-of indulgences, for prisoners in whom you have no interest save mere human sympathy, surely you should be willing to intercede for ladies who have become your close friends on a long voyage up-river."

"I am willing," Hawthorne said, "more than willing. But it seems to me that I ought not to presume too much on my favour at the Palacio, nor should favouritism figure at all in a matter that should be settled by mere statement of the facts, on a basis of plain justice."

"Plain justice," Bianquet put in, "is easy, even too easy, to come by at the Palacio once you have caught El Supremo's ear. But it is very difficult to catch his ear. He is likely to decide any matter half heard, on first impulse."

"That is precisely why I am even eager to go with you,"

Hawthorne rejoined. "If any such danger appears, I can ensure a full hearing. I can speak up quite naturally as a close friend of both the injured ladies. But the first statement of the case should come from you, Doña Juanita's husband, and, in the absence of her family, from Señorita Velarde's godfather."

"I had rather you acted as spokesman," Don Gregorio sighed. "We hoped you would, that is why we came for you."

"I am a foreigner," Hawthorne replied, "and this is my seventh day in Asuncion. Don Manuel has sojourned here for two years. You have lived here so long that you have almost forgotten you were born at Cordova. This is no matter for a foreigner to meddle in if he can keep out of it. If you need a spokesman, call on Beltran; he will throw himself into the affair with vigour and use all his powers of persuasion, which are not small."

"Beltran," Don Gregorio said, "will not come in from Itapuá until just before the second mass. Then it will be too late to explain matters to him and enlist his help in time to effect anything to-day. Next Sunday will bring reparation for Doña Juanita, but Ventura must set out to-morrow for San Bernardino. It took all our wheedling to induce her to remain over to-day. She stayed only because of her desire to go to communion in the Cathedral. Nothing will induce her to remain longer. She must be vindicated to-day or never. Beltran cannot now arrive in time to help us."

"Let us set off at once, then," Hawthorne summed up.

(3)

On their way to the Government House, both tried to persuade Hawthorne to put himself forward, approach the sentry, and lead the way into the dread presence. He clung to his first resolution.

Don Gregorio explained that Francia regarded his Sundays as all his own, as golden leisure to be spent in rest, meditation, reading, study or scientific investigations. He detested to be disturbed, and any intrusion roused his wrath. All Asuncion knew that he had given explicit or-

ders that Hawthorne was to be admitted at any hour of the day or night. If he availed himself of his privilege, the Dictator could not take any umbrage.

Hawthorne insisted that he keep back and use his influence only as a last resort.

The sentinel at the entrance to the Palacio courtyard looked with no favour on the two gentlemen, and only after a lengthy expostulation did he call Bopî.

The mulatto was curt and brusque to the dons; but when they stood apart and he recognised Hawthorne behind them he cringed and jabbered Guarani.

"He says," Don Gregorio whispered, "that you may enter but we may not."

"Tell him," Hawthorne replied, "that unless he takes in your names to El Supremo, I shall be very angry and equally angry if he mentions my name along with yours."

Bopî cringed yet more and went off. He returned with permission to enter.

They found Francia not in uniform, but wearing his flowered calico dressing-gown over his sabre and belt, girt upon the black waistcoat, knee-breeches and stockings of a doctor of laws. His hair was not queued nor powdered, but hanging over his shoulders in long black ringlets, natural and glossy. He had a cigar in one hand and a *maté* gourd in the other, for, as to every genuine Paraguayan, so to the exalted doctor, leisure, even his cultured leisure, meant, even if along with reading or study, continual smoking and almost continual sipping of the national beverage.

When they were still some paces from him he recognised Hawthorne and stood up, calling out:

"Señor Don Guillermo! Why did you not send in your name?"

"I am merely accompanying these gentlemen," Hawthorne replied. "The business on which we have come is scarcely mine, and decidedly theirs."

"Business!" Francia exclaimed, without any greetings to any of the three. "Business on a Sunday! What business?"

He glared alternately at Don Gregorio and Don Manuel.

"What brings you here on a holy day?" he demanded.

Bowing ceremoniously, the plumes of their cocked hats sweeping the pavement, both uttered:

"Excelentísimo Señor——" And both thereupon relapsed into silence, continuing to bow.

"Come! Come!" the Dictator blurted out testily. "Am I watching a puppet-show? Since you are here, speak up!"

He set his *maté* gourd on the table, where it rolled over two or three times before it came to rest on one of its flatter sides, threw his cigar on the pavement, and leaned forward in his chair, a hand on each arm of it, his attitude all attention.

"We have a petition to present," Don Manuel began.

"On Sunday!" Francia exclaimed. "Will it not wait until Monday?"

"The case is peculiar," Don Manuel replied, with spirit. "An injustice has been done which can be remedied only on a Sunday and should be atoned for at once. This, at least, is our view. We ask you to hear our statement and decide, believing that you will consider our complaint well justified."

"Don Manuel," the Dictator responded slowly, his eyes fixed on the merchant's, "you are gravely suspected of unfair dealings with us Paraguayans. Grumblings reach my ears that the quality of your wares is sometimes, is often, not as represented; that your profits are unconscionably great wherever the cost to you of your goods is unknown to the purchasers; that your driving of bargains is too wily to be thought just; that you are a fierce and relentless creditor to any unfortunate debtor. I do not love men who make for themselves such a reputation in a two years' sojourn. But while I warn you that you are under suspicion, I have no proofs against you. If I ever hear proof of the rumours I have detailed, you shall smart for your evil ways. I warn you. Meantime, a man only under suspicion is a man to be treated, in all other matters, as if under no cloud. I shall no more disfavour you than favour you. Speak out. State your case fully and fearlessly."

Señor Bianquet thereupon described Doña Juanita's humiliation. Francia listened, put in several questions concerning the lady's demeanour, and then commanded:

"Describe precisely what your wife was wearing, omitting nothing."

Don Manuel began with the black satin shoes, and was

as exact and exhaustive in his description as a mere man could be expected to be in the matter of ladies' apparel. Francia listened closely, several times nodding and ejaculating:

"Nothing to object to; nothing! Perfectly proper!

"Corsets!" he exclaimed later. "There's the difficulty, the chief difficulty!

"Go on!" he commanded. "Go on!" And he listened benignantly.

But when Don Manuel uttered the words "gold comb," Francia visibly bristled and glared.

"A gold comb?" he burst out. "In church? A gold comb on your wife? Your wife wore a gold comb in church? Your wife? This is a strange sort of wife you have brought from Montevideo, Don Manuel. I have heard of queer doings, but never yet of a gentleman wedding a Gold Comb, still less of his advertising the fact; far less of her advertising it! And on Sunday, and with her husband! And in church! This is indeed monstrous! I do not wonder that she was expelled, and I do wonder at your having the effrontery to come here and complain. Begone!"

Don Manuel, stunned and dumb, was too dazed to move a muscle. Don Gregorio was almost equally abashed.

"May I speak?" Hawthorne interjected.

"Certainly!" Francia answered in his normal voice and tones.

"And may the petitioners remain until I have spoken?"

"If you wish," the Dictator consented grudgingly.

#### (4)

"I believe," Hawthorne began, "that Asuncion is the only city on earth where a gold comb in her hair is a badge of degradation and shame for any woman. Not only does a gold comb imply no disrepute in Philadelphia or Boston, London or Paris, but I saw not only merely respectable women, but ladies of the highest and most honoured families in Buenos Aires wearing gold combs in their hair even in the streets, even in church. In church I saw none in Santa Fé or Corrientes, for we were not ashore at either

on Sunday, but at both I saw ladies of the best families wearing gold combs on the street. So it is quite natural that Doña Juanita should know nothing of the local peculiarities of Asuncion."

"You are right!" Francia exclaimed, slapping his knee. "I have read as much, read it more than once, but it slipped my mind. Don Manuel, I apologise for my implications, though you perceive how naturally I fell into my error."

Don Manuel bowed.

"But tell me," Francia continued, "how did it happen that you did not warn your wife? You have been here two years. Surely you knew our local customs?"

"I had been told, I now remember," Don Manuel admitted. "But my associations here have not been with such women nor with men who frequent them. As with yourself, Excelentísimo Señor, if you will permit me to make the comparison, the fact slipped my mind."

"Very well spoken," Francia chuckled, "and I am disposed to grant your petition, which you have not formulated. I conjecture that you desire me to compel the clergy to admit your wife to church and communion in the garb she wore when expelled from the Cathedral?"

Don Manuel confirmed the Dictator's surmise.

"In the absence of Bishop de Panés," Francia went on, "you were quite right to appeal to me. But I cannot see that I should interfere. 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do,' says the old proverb. It is all very well for your wife to introduce the fashions of Europe and Buenos Aires or Montevideo at a *tertulia* or *fiesta*. Last Thursday I thought her entirely justified by the effect she produced, and I could wish to see some of our city beauties similarly habited. But local customs of worship are not lightly to be infringed upon by any one. A novelty that gives scandal is scandalous in giving scandal. And as to regulations of what goes on in the Cathedral the clergy are in their right to use their discretion. It is for them to decide what garb fits the interior of the sacred building. If your wife desires to attend services, to receive communion, she must conform to the regulations the clergy see fit to impose."

Don Manuel bowed in silence.

"And you, Don Gregorio," Francia continued, "was it to second Don Manuel's petition that you came here?"

"Excelentísimo Señor," said Don Gregorio, bowing, "I have one of my own in addition."

"You cannot expect me, Gregorio," Francia sneered, "to welcome a petition from you or look on it with favour. But you shall have justice. I listen."

"Along with Doña Juanita Bianquet," Don Gregorio said, "my goddaughter was expelled from the Cathedral on the same pretext."

"And you disturb me and take up my time for this!" Francia snorted. "Don Manuel had some basis of complaint, and Doña Juanita erred innocently. But that one of your innumerable goddaughters should be so carried away by vanity as to imitate an imported fashion before she who brought it had time to air it herself, should be in such a rage of emulation that she must needs garb herself in the foreign style three days after it was first seen in Paraguay, should be so tactless that she must first show it in church, this is not to be borne. Tell her that what is good enough for other women here is good enough for her, that what has been good enough for her will always be good enough for her. And remember, if you ever present yourself before me again with so baseless a complaint, with so frivolous a petition, I shall see that you are properly chastened for your temerity."

Don Gregorio might almost have been said to shrink visibly, his chagrin so permeated him. Yet he essayed to speak.

"But I thought——" he began.

"Think when you are permitted to think!" Francia thundered. "When I speak, obey; and remember that by the voice of the people I have been designated to think for you as well as for all the rest of Paraguay!"

The two dons, baffled and humiliated, were still incredulous in their disappointment. They hesitated to go, yet were almost in act to bow their leave-takings.

The "Go with God!" was visibly forming itself on Francia's lips, when Hawthorne again interposed:

"Most Excellent Sir," he said, "may I speak again?"

"Now we shall get at the point, I perceive!" Francia exclaimed, "only don't '*Excelentísimo Señor*' me any more. Say 'you' or omit any form of address. Speak, by all means. I have been wondering at your presence with these



gentlemen. You may speak as many words as you please. You do not speak at random. I have already noted that, and I can refuse you nothing, as you well comprehend."

"Don Gregorio," Hawthorne said, "did not tell you the name of the particular goddaughter to whom he had reference."

Francia frowned again.

"What has her name to do with a matter already decided?" he queried haughtily.

Hawthorne's still grey eyes bored into his.

"I do not speak at random, you tell me," he uttered.

Francia inclined his head.

"Don Gregorio," he asked tonelessly, "which of your swarm of goddaughters suffered expulsion from the Cathedral because of the novelty of her attire?"

"It was Señorita Ventura Velarde," Don Gregorio told him.

Francia stood up abruptly. Abruptly he sat down again. The palm of his hand drummed on the jaguar-head finial of the chair-arm. His eyes narrowed, his nostrils dilated.

"Señorita Velarde, then," he uttered, "did not set out for San Bernardino yesterday?"

"No," said Don Gregorio; "she remained in Asuncion to hear mass and receive holy communion before the final stage of her home journey. The *Nuestra Señora del Carmen* happened to reach Santa Fé on a Monday and Corrientes on a Tuesday; in neither case did Banfi dare to delay when a favourable wind sprang up. So that Ventura has not heard mass since she left Buenos Aires."

"And these brutes," the Dictator burst out, "these barbarians, these rustics, these unschooled provincial monks, these fools of priests of Asuncion, affront, insult, expel from church a young lady of a lineage the best in Paraguay, of a culture better than the best, of a presence and mien that would command the respect of idiots or fiends!"

"This is the work of that dolt Montiel! This would never have happened had Bishop de Panés been in Asuncion. He is a gentleman withal and a travelled patrician, a cosmopolite. He would have comprehended.

"However, the point now is to set right the blunder his imbecile underlings have committed. I'll show them!"

Señorita Velarde shall have mass, shall receive communion in the identical garb which she wore when expelled."

At these words Francia paused. His face turned grey. His mouth opened.

"Don Gregorio," he almost whispered, "did Señorita Ventura wear a gold comb?"

"She did," Don Gregorio admitted shamefacedly.

"And you did not warn her!" Francia reproached him.

Don Gregorio hung his head.

"I am a Cordovez, by birth," he pleaded. "The consciousness of the customs of Asuncion is not part of myself. I should have noticed, but I never did. All I perceived was that every part of her attire perfectly became her."

"The innocent angel!" Francia breathed softly. "She left here too young to be smirched with any knowledge of our vices or sins. She has become habituated to the usages of politer communities. And she must suffer for it! Those who made her suffer shall make full reparation; and before all our world and at once."

Again he checked.

"Have you gentlemen breakfasted?" he queried.

"We have," Don Manuel replied, forgetting to put in the title, "but not Juanita nor Ventura. They were so sure of vindication that both are still fasting, awaiting our return."

"A long fast," spoke Francia grimly. "But I shall make it worth their while."

He pulled out his big silver-cased English watch.

"The second mass has already begun," he said. "But there is time. Tell Doña Juanita and Señorita Ventura to endure their fast in patience and with fortitude. Before noon I shall arrange a mass for them. Be ready to escort them, you shall have ample warning. Let them attend garbed precisely as before, except in one particular. I am absolute, supreme, all-powerful. But there are limits to my power. I can order a mass at any time before noon, but I cannot authorise gold combs in church. I can decree what I please, but no decree of mine or of any man could make gold combs respectable in Asuncion. No gold combs!" And he added:

"Go with God!"

## CHAPTER XXI

## SERVICE BY EDICT

(1)

AS they rounded the conspicuous corner of the Government House, they encountered Dr. Parlett, sober enough to have all his wits about him, but sufficiently mellow to be feeling humorous and to think it clever to pretend to be more intoxicated than he was. He placed himself squarely in their way, planted his feet wide apart and swayed drunkenly, a trifle too drunkenly.

Don Gregorio and Don Manuel, with greetings urbane but brief, steered round him, but Hawthorne went up to him, explaining to his two receding companions:

"You have no more need of me now."

They expressed their thanks repeatedly and went their way.

Hawthorne was really glad to meet Parlett. Francia had called to him an after-thought invitation to remain, which he had evaded out of consideration for his fellow-petitioners and an instinct against wearing out the capricious Dictator's interest in him, but also on account of his own interest in the scenes he had had a glimpse of in the Plaza as they had traversed it on their way to the Palacio. Here was an excellent chance to survey them with an entirely competent guide.

The little surgeon winked elaborately and remarked muzzily:

"Too sober to shtop an' talk to a feller. Bad thing, be too sober on Sunday. I'm not too sober, jus' sober 'nough. That's where I'm different from a Payaguá Indian. Payaguá Indians get drunk on St. John's day, take two days to sober up, stay sober till next St. John's day: I stay sober on St. John's day, get half drunk before mornin', keep half drunk till nex' St. John's day. Le's go look for some Payaguá Indians. They're sober now after two days. They stan' still an' keep their mouths shut. These people mull aroun' an' keep their mouths goin'. Hurts my head."

He indicated by a comprehensive, all-embracing gesture

the sound of chaffering in shrill Guarani that filled the Plaza.

The Plaza sprawled from the Cathedral to the Palacio, an ill-defined, irregular open space nearly a hundred yards wide and more than three hundred yards long. A narrow, shallow, thorn-grown gully divided it into two unequal parts. The southeast part, near the Cathedral, known as the Cathedral Plaza, was somewhat the smaller of the two. The larger portion, northwestward towards the Palacio, was known as the Market Plaza or Market-Square. All along their southwest flank away from the river they were bounded by buildings: the Cathedral Plaza by Calle Comercio with the continuous corridor of its row of shops on its other side, the Market Plaza proper by the fronts of the hideous Government warehouses and the front of the Cabildo. On the north and east side of the Cathedral Plaza no buildings stood except a few small warehouses, scattered and straggling. The river side of the Market Square was partly taken up by the infantry and cavalry barracks under which were the dungeons, and by the cavalry stables.

The entire open space where now are the radiating walks, neat grass plots and trim shrubberies of the "*Plaza de Armas*" was then an uneven, hillocky expanse of utterly uncared-for ground, with puddles or dust between the hillocks, according to the weather.

Hawthorne saw it fairly hidden by a motley assemblage of dingy, round-hatted, ponchoed peons, bareheaded women of the populace in immaculate white *tupois*, ladies concealed under amplitudes of *rebozo* and *bayetilla* and gentry, under plumed cocked-hats in gorgeous, gaudy silks, velvets or satins of every conceivable hue, every gentleman wearing a court-sword, rapier, or sabre.

There was not a stall, awning, chair or stool anywhere in the market. The sellers, five out of every six women, squatted on the ground; in front of each a mat, flat-basket or hide-tray. Venders and vendibles were arranged roughly in rows more or less straight, leaving just enough room between for the passage of the purchasers and idlers.

Along the front of the warehouses were town-dealers too insignificant to have shops of their own, appealing mostly to the trade of the market-people themselves and the influx

from the country-side, and showing saddles displayed on racks, ponchos, water-jars, pots and pans, rope, hatchets, knives, combs, looking-glasses, and other such merchandise. But almost all the rest of the market space was taken up with eatables.

Along the space by Calle Comercio were drawn up the butchers' carts and wagons, straw-thatched and filled pell-mell with lean, stringy beef, cut up without any approach to uniformity, or any regard to the structure of the slaughtered animals.

The hardware dealers and butchers were mostly men, lounging about and far less interesting to Hawthorne than the squatting women, before whom he observed jars of rum, of the local wine, of *chichá* beer, of molasses and of honey, and canisters of salt; and on whose hide-trays, flat baskets and mats he saw lambs, sucking pigs, fowls, pigeons, partridges, wild ducks, squabs, and various sorts of little birds, all snared and offered for sale alive; eggs, *chipá* bread, some of manioc, some of Indian corn; Indian corn-meal, Indian corn dried, ears of green Indian corn; bundles of rhubarb stalks, of sarsaparilla, of fresh manioc; various kinds of beans, melons, figs, bananas; pineapples in abundance; and oranges, oranges everywhere.

Candles made of *quabirá* wax or bees' wax or of tallow were a favourite form of merchandise. Many had flowers for sale, many others pies and pastry, some had sweet cakes, some peppers, garlic and onions.

Also there were bundles of firewood, packs of charcoal, packages of raw cotton, packets of raw sugar and parcels of tobacco.

But always oranges, oranges in heaps, piles and mounds.

Hawthorne commented on their profusion.

Parlett, his pretence of being more nearly drunk than he really was already forgotten, assented, continuing in his natural voice:

"You can always buy five for a *maravedí*, which is four for a farthing: in the season I have bought twenty-five for a *maravedí*. How it pays anybody to pick them and carry them to town, I can never conjecture."

"How do they bring them in?" Hawthorne queried.

"A few," Parlett replied, "who are looked upon by the others as almost wealthy, drive in from even four leagues

away in carts, and God knows how their horses (and some are well enough off to own horses), or their mules, ever tug anything on wheels four leagues or five through the heart-breaking sand of the lanes hereabouts. Some ride horses or mules, and drive others with panniers; more walk beside their two-panniered horse or mule or donkey."

"Yes," Hawthorne reflected, "I saw some on Thursday."

"You couldn't help it," the surgeon said. "And you met more afoot with their merchandise on their heads, the way most of these brought in theirs."

"Most of these walked!" Hawthorne exclaimed.

"They did, my boy," Parlett assured him, "two leagues, or even three and with a load that would be no joke for a man's back, let alone for a woman's head."

Hawthorne looked round at those small heads, with their neatly braided black hair, the broad, serene foreheads, tiny ears, brown eyes, straight noses and narrow rounded chins. All the women, old as well as young, were personable and comely. All were merry, gay and smiling, with sparkling eyes, animated countenances, and frequent peals of laughter punctuated their perpetual cross-fire of calls, chaff and chatter. All had small hands and feet, very clean, every one wore a spotless white cotton *tupoi*, emphasised by a belt gaudy with embroidery in brilliant greens, reds and blues and especially glaring yellows and pinks. These belts were the only bit of colour on any woman anywhere.

"If they tramp so far," Hawthorne queried, "how do they keep so clean?"

"Not one," said Parlett, "not even the poorest, but carries a fresh *tupoi* with her. Once here and her wares spread, her donkey or horse or mule, if she has one, turned out to graze or browse, if he can find forage, she leaves her vendibles in charge of some chance neighbour, whose only care is to keep away stray dogs or other beasts, for no Paraguayan ever steals anything. Off she goes to the river side, there she bathes her feet. If the day is hot, off comes her belt and she plunges in for a swim; they all can swim. After her swim or her foot-bath, she dries her feet, slips her clean *tupoi* over her head, drops her dusty or soaked *tupoi* to the ground, belts her fresh gown, picks up her discarded garment, and comes back here, clean-ankled and fresh from top to toe, as you see them all."

"Clean as the buyers," Hawthorne commented.

"But no cleaner," Parlett added. "Cleanliness is a national virtue, especially among the women."

Hawthorne, continuing his survey, remarked:

"I should guess there are five hundred market women here."

"More like six hundred to-day," Parlett corrected him.

"On week days there are seldom over four hundred, and often fewer. But Sunday market is the chief social event of the week for the lower classes of the population, and not the least for the gentry. On week days it begins soon after sunrise and is all over before the day is warm; on Sunday it begins after the first mass and lasts until the heat absolutely drives the last loafer to shelter.

"Everybody comes to buy, or lingers to talk. It's fashionable to be seen here, a sort of out-of-doors reception. The common folk do their haggling while seeing their friends; the rich see their friends and overlook their servants selecting, chaffering and purchasing. All the wealth and fashion of Asuncion are here, all your fellow-guests at *Comadre Juana's*, all who thought they should have been invited there, all who were sorry they were not exalted enough to be invited; except those who are now in at the second mass. And they are all talking at once. It hurts my head, I tell you. Let's get closer to the Payaguá Indians, and let's have a drink. I'm dry. Native wine is not as good as Jenofonte's Mendoza vintages, but it's a lot better than nothing. You won't? Well, I will."

And the little surgeon drained a generous draft out of an earthenware jar.

Along the river side of the Plaza, from the Cathedral to the cavalry stables, interrupted only at the thorny gully, the Payaguá Indians fringed the assemblage. They were big men, well-made and athletic, barefoot, bare-legged and clad only in a sort of kilt, leaving them naked from the waist up, except for necklaces of silver beads, rings and tubes. In their ears they wore great pieces of wood or bone as big as a large man's wrist or even bigger, distending the lobe of the ear till it formed a mere strap of flesh round the ornamental disk.

Some had their women with them naked from the waist up like the men, except that a few had ponchos, embroid-

ered with patterns in gaudy beads and silver tubes. Each wore skewered through her lower lip a big-headed, long-stemmed silver bodkin, its point depending to her breast-bone.

Most of the women merely stood or squatted about, but some offered for sale parrots: tiny green parroquets, the size of a wren, vivacious and sagacious little birds, constantly imitating the louder-voiced of the bystanders; the green and yellow parrots common all over Paraguay; the rarer red and blue parrots, like macaws; but mostly common Paraguayan parrots dyed and tinged till they were red, green, yellow and blue all at the same time.

Of the big, self-confident men, some had for sale bundles of coarse *chala* grass cut from the Gran Chaco across the river, ferried over in their canoes and sold at a *maravedí* a bundle.

Others, and a great majority of them, had fish for sale, magnificent fish, pendant from their long canoe-paddles. There were red-scaled snappers, *pacú*, mullets, *dorados*, turbot, rainbow-hued parrot fish, tuna, others that Hawthorne had also eaten coming up the river, and yet others unknown to him.

His long draft of native wine had made Parlett, by this time, almost as drunk as he had at first pretended to be. He now really swayed on his feet and hyperbolised with much enjoyment of his own wit:

"Payaguá Indian rather run than walk, rather walk than stand, rather stand than sit down. Strong enough to stand all day from sunrise till sunset an' carry over each shoulder a nine-foot paddle festooned from one end to the other with fish a yard long. Stan' an' hol' up all that fish all day 'f he don' sell it, an' never tire out. Never sit down all day an' never tire out. Never sit down all day an' never open his mouth. These women never shut their mouths. When you're 'mongst the women, think you'd like Payaguá Indians better. Get 'mongst 'em an' you remember you've a nose. Payaguás 'fend your nose more 'an chatterin' an' gabblin' women hurt your head. F' my part, I prefer cackle in Guarani to stink fr'm dumb Payaguás.

"Le's go back 'mongst the women."

The Payaguás, in fact, seemed no more a part of the market-scene than the butchers' carts on the other side of



the square. They framed it in, like the buildings round about, but were not of it.

Itself was, as Parlett had said, an out-of-door reception, and one of a very courtly and urbane kind for all its complete informality and primitive simplicity. The spontaneous cheerfulness and light-hearted gaiety impressed Hawthorne most of all.

(2)

Before the congregation began to stream out of the Cathedral from the second mass, the lighthearted gaiety of the market gathering was more than a little clouded, at least among the gentry, by the activity they observed suddenly manifest itself at the barracks.

Messengers and couriers passed back and forth from the Palacio to barracks, and barracks to Palacio, squads of soldiers started off at double-quick, one down river towards the Dominican Monastery and the prison, two between the Palacio and the Cabildo towards the Encarnacion Church and the suburban barracks, one up Calle Concepcion towards the Convent of the Mercedarios, two past the Cathedral, towards the Franciscan Monastery and the church of San Roque.

Squads of cavalry rode off in all these directions and yet in others. Orderlies dashed about, horsemen galloping all round the plaza, even bursting through the line of butchers' carts into Calle Concepcion.

The people in the Plaza grew visibly uneasy, at least all the gentry were plainly doing their best to seem gay and show no anxiety. When, just after the last loiterers of the congregation had left the Cathedral, the throng in the square was at its flood tide, anxiety, even consternation became general; for behold, from behind the Cathedral reappeared Captain Fulano Garmendia and his eight grenadiers, now not galloping, but riding at a slow walk. The reason for their deliberation was at once manifest. They were conveying a fat bay mare, whose rider wore ecclesiastical garb and held over himself a big brown sunshade.

As the awful spectacle of a priest under arrest caught the attention, first of part and then of more of the crowd, a hush spread over the square. At first the gazers desried

only the broad umbrella, the shovel hat, and the friar's habit: then the nearest recognised the Vicar-General Padre Don Fray Damaso Montiel himself. At once they knelt and begged his blessing, the women with streaming eyes. Before he had crossed the Cathedral plaza every human being, save the heathen Payaguás, was kneeling.

Fray Damaso repeatedly blessed the bowed throng, smiling and calling out again and again:

"I am not going to prison. Do not be uneasy. I am merely summoned to an urgent conference. You will see me return shortly. You will see all the Priors pass to join me at the Palacio. Do not be alarmed. We shall all come back within an hour."

In fact the Priors did traverse the square at intervals, each on horseback under his umbrella, each convoyed by a captain or lieutenant and eight dragoons.

The first to appear was the tall, spare, dignified Prior of the Mercedarios, Don Fray Hermengildo Cañete. He had not been at Itapuá, nor had any of his few brethren, as their austerity scorned feastings and revelries. He was a stern-faced old man, very erect and almost regal in his impressive garb, an ample gown of white wool, girded at the waist with a plain leather belt; on the left breast the gorgeous arms of the Cathedral of Barcelona, the complete Royal arms of Aragon, surmounted by a silver cross on a crimson field.

After him came the Franciscan Prior looking scared and grey.

Not far behind him the Dictator's uncle, Don Fray Melquiades Caballero.

Later the parish priest of San Roque.

Last, Fray Procopio Baca, Prior of the Recoletanos, from their suburban monastery.

Each reassured the populace as had the Vicar-General, but the women, though their weeping had ceased, chattered excitedly. The men talked in whispers, much perturbed and greatly subdued.

The tension burst into wild rejoicings when the ecclesiastics reappeared, after not a long detention in the Palacio, all now without their grim convoys, and trotted briskly each his way, showering blessings in all directions as they passed.

Scarcely had the last vanished and hardly had the market renewed its suspended chattering, chaffering and circulating, when the sound of fifes and drums rose above the hubbub and quieted it as the crowd stood silent to listen.

From the direction of the Palacio appeared a tall white plume fluttering above a huge cocked hat, under it the face of the Secretary of State, Don Gumesindo Estagarribia; his crimson *capote* fluttering behind him, his white lace shirt-frill billowing before, his blue coat buttoned tight. He sat aloft on a tall, cream-coloured horse, a long parchment in his hand. Before him tramped and plied their instruments a drummer and two fifers; behind him as many more.

Into the midst of the throng he advanced pompously, his gentlemanly stallion stepping daintily among the squatting women and crowded trays, never treading on or jostling any.

Upon a hillock he took his stand and read aloud the decree in his stentorian voice:

“By this *bando*,” he roared, “by this edict, by this enactment, by this proclamation, by this announcement, by this promulgation, it is published, heralded, blazoned, and advertised that on this day, Sunday, June 27th, of the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and sixteen, there will be a third mass at the Cathedral, commencing, that is to say, beginning, a half hour before noon. Take notice all ye that hear me, take notice. It is enjoined, ordained, decreed, prescribed, commanded, directed, suggested, in short, required, that every gentleman of Asuncion shall attend, that is to say assist at, in short, be present at this third mass hereby announced, and shall bring to it all his kinsfolk, that is to say, his wife, children, parents and any and all brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts or other relations residing, dwelling or abiding, in short living at his house or mansion, in a word, his family. None shall be left at home, save only the sick, under penalty of the severe displeasure of our supreme Dictator. The attendance, that is to say the presence, of labourers, servants, market-folk and other such will be permitted, but is not ordered, that is to say, is not obligatory, or in other words is left to their own discretion. Men wearing jackets or ponchos, men commonly so

habited, may absent themselves from this third mass if they please, or hear it if they prefer.

"But if any gentleman, any *hidalgo*, any man commonly wearing a coat, any *hombre de casaca*, any patrician habitually girt with a sword, in other words, any person of fashion, wealth or position, in short any man of means, that is to say, any grandee, absents himself from this mass unless too ill to walk from his house to the Cathedral, he shall be arrested promptly and speedily shot, without reprieve or mercy, and all his property shall, without reserve or exception, be confiscated to the State exchequer.

"Hear, listen, hearken and attend and communicate this edict to all your friends, relations and acquaintances, lest they come under its penalties by failing to obey it."

After this reading he made his way out of the throng and Plaza, to repeat the proclamation elsewhere. After he had vanished up Calle Concepcion the hush in the square changed to a faint buzz of talk, which rapidly augmented into a hubbub of excited palaver.

Not long after the sounds of the drums and fifes were lost in the distance, some of the crowd closest to the Cathedral observed Padre Lisardo Bogarin, without his sabre, and convoyed by a squad of soldiers, enter the Cathedral parsonage.

(3)

The conference in the Palacio had been very little to the taste of any of the clergymen and friars bidden to it, and least of all to that of Vicar-General Montiel.

He and the others as they came one by one were kept waiting in the outer courtyard until Padre Procopio Baca, the last comer, had arrived.

Then and not till then did Francia enter from the other court, fresh shaved, his hair powdered and gathered into a queue, wearing the blue uniform coat of a Spanish General, with buff-facings, white cord breeches, white stockings, low shoes, and a long grandee's rapier.

He greeted the ecclesiastics curtly, seated himself in his official chair, and bade them be reseated.

Then he began, using no form of address usual towards

the clergy from pious Spaniards, but speaking as if to laymen:

"Gentlemen, I have summoned you here to listen and be witnesses to some questions I have to put to Padre Damaso, and to his replies."

He fixed Montiel with a keen gaze and spoke again:

"It has been told me that two ladies were to-day expelled from the Cathedral during the first mass, denied the right to hear it, and refused the eucharist. Is this true?"

"It is," the Vicar-General replied without hesitation.

"Why was this done?" Francia queried sharply.

"They were not becomingly attired for the interior of a sacred edifice," Padre Damaso replied, "nor for the solemnity of a mass."

"In what did the impropriety of their attire consist?" the Dictator pursued.

Pai Montiel reflected.

"Come, come!" Francia rapped out sharply. "Speak up."

But the Vicar-General was wrestling in spirit with the technicalities of female attire. He spoke, after a further interval:

"They were without *rebozos*, were not garbed in *bayetilla*, but in gay stuffs, with much lace, suitable for a *tertulia* or *fiesta*, not for worship. They wore white gloves and carried fans. Likewise they wore, apparently, confining bodices of some sort, making their waists resemble the middles of wasps.

"Moreover, in their hair were displayed gold combs."

"And because of their attire," Francia uttered with precision, "they were refused the eucharist, denied participation in the mass and expelled from the Cathedral."

Pai Damaso inclined his head.

"They were," he stated, "and for that reason."

"Don Hermengildo," Francia said, "you have been in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Cadiz, Madrid, Barcelona, and Rome. Is it not so?"

"I have been in all these cities," the Mercedario replied.

"Would a lady dressed as Padre Damaso has described be refused entrance into a church in any of those cities?"

"In none," Padre Cañete responded instantly.

"You hear!" Francia shot at the Vicar-General.

"I hear," Montiel replied, with some spirit, "but what is done in other cities has no weight here. It is the custom here for ladies to wear *bayetilla* to mass and to cover their heads with *rebozos*. The startling garments of these new arrivals gave scandal. It is my duty to suppress anything that mars the devotion of the worshippers at mass. I acted as I must, for such matters lie within my discretion, I being the head of the Church in the absence of the Bishop."

Francia swelled like an angry turkey cock and glared at Montiel.

"The Bishop," he hissed, "is a gentleman, a travelled patrician, a cultured cosmopolite. He would never have disgraced Asuncion with such a barbarity or himself with such a blunder. In his absence matters go wrong, being left to your indiscretion. You are an ignorant clodhopper, a stupid rustic, a boor, a brute.

"You, the head of the Church!

"Know, *bribon*, that be the Bishop absent or present, I am the head of the Church, as of all institutions in Paraguay."

A shudder visibly quivered through the assemblage.

"I speak the truth!" Francia shrilled. "I am supreme. Paraguay is independent. She owes no more allegiance to the Pope of Rome than to the King of Spain. I replace both."

Horror was painted upon every face among his auditors.

"I utter the law," said Francia sternly. "Let him who dares, disobey me; he disobeys at his peril, layman or cleric."

"What are your commands?" Padre Cañete queried coolly.

"That a third mass be celebrated this very day, a high mass, a grand high mass," Francia dictated. "That all the gentry of the place be bidden to it as witnesses of the reparation made to these ladies, that they attend attired as they were when expelled from the Cathedral, that they receive communion before all the congregation, so attired."

There was an astounded silence.

Don Melquiades Caballero was the first to speak:

"Nephew," he said, "do you seriously mean to defile

God's temple by the presence of women wearing gold combs?"

"One of the two ladies," Francia said, "is a *Montevideana*, daughter of a brave French officer who lost his life gloriously in the course of his duty while serving Montevideo. Her mother was a *Montevideana* of excellent family. She is the wife of Don Manuel Bianquet of Montevideo, domiciled here at Asuncion now these two years as a merchant.

"The other lady is Señorita Velarde, eldest daughter of Don Toribio of San Bernardino. She has been absent from Paraguay now for eight years, most of which she spent in Spain.

"These two ladies, you perceive, are not such women as flaunt gold combs through the streets of Asuncion. Both are habituated to the customs of more polished communities; neither knew anything of our local idiosyncrasies; the one because she had arrived here but a few days ago, the other because she left here while a mere child. Had Bishop de Panés been in the Cathedral one glance at the ladies would have enlightened him fully as to the situation. At first sight of their faces he would have appraised them at their true worth and understood and sympathised. He would have sent them an unobtrusive message to remove and conceal their combs. He might then have spoken to the agitated natives a few words to explain the marvel and tranquillise their dismay. He would not have mismanaged.

"As for the rest of their attire, is there anything uncanonical in stays, gloves, fans or lace? I ask you, my uncle, and you Don Hermengildo?"

"Nothing uncanonical," both replied.

"*Rebozos* and *bayetilla*," Francia clinched his argument, "are customary for the gentry. But since all women of the populace hear mass in their *tupois*, with only their *mantas* over their heads, there is evidently no compulsion upon any woman to wear *bayetilla* or a *rebozo*."

The clergymen were silenced.

"But," presently spoke up Padre Ignacio Maestre, "these ladies have undoubtedly broken their fast and may not communicate until to-morrow."

Francia, with few words, enlightened the Dominican Prior.

"But," interjected Padre Procopio Baca, "your Excellency forgets that there is no priest in Asuncion who has not, by this hour, either broken his fast or nearly finished his second mass."

"I made quite sure that there is one," Francia smiled. "Padre Bogarin never goes to bed betimes and never gets up betimes. I have sent a guard to make doubly sure that he is fasting, and, as you all know, he has officiated at no mass for many a Sunday."

They still sat silent.

Francia burst out:

"Away with difficulties! There are none. I have answered all possible objections, have stooped to explain and to argue. Now hear my orders. I am absolute in Paraguay, in civil, military and sacred affairs. I decree a third mass. Padre Lisardo will celebrate it. Choose who shall be deacon, who sub-deacon. I suggest you, my good uncle, and Don Hermengildo, as most respected by all, as likely to give most significance to the public reparation I insist upon. See to it that every priest, monk and friar in Asuncion attends in some capacity. Beware of rousing me! I have a mitigated respect for your cloth and I comprehend your value as part of our community, but I am capable of sending every one of you to the *banquillo* if you thwart me. Remember this is no matter of conscience, no contravention of your vows I ask. I order mere decent reparation for a silly muddle. I speak plain common-sense. Your Bishop would smile at your blunder, your Pope would laugh. There is no pretext for making yourselves out martyrs.

"Do you consent?"

Each looked at the others.

Padre Hermengildo spoke first.

"As the authority of the Bishop and the authority of the Pope are both impugned," he said, "it seems to me that it is our duty to refuse on principle."

Padre Melquiades nodded.

"Theoretically," he agreed, "I am of the like opinion."

"You have uttered the words 'theoretically' and 'on principle' in your replies," Francia said silkily, "the word 'but' you have not uttered, yet I seemed to hear each of you about to utter it."



"I will supply the omission," Padre Ignacio continued. "Theory and principle are all very well, but practically, considering the circumstances that confront us, we had best consent."

"In addition to which," spoke Padre Santiago Reloyos, Prior of the Franciscans, "El Supremo appears to be almost, if not completely, in the right."

"Do you then consent?" Francia snapped.

"I consent," Padre Montiel sighed.

Francia rose.

"At a half hour before noon," he said, "let the mass begin."

And he added:

"I shall attend and be present!"

At these last words every one of his auditors looked ten times more thunderstruck than before.

(4)

At eleven o'clock the Cathedral bell commenced to ring its loudest. The crowd from the Plaza shortly began to move in the direction of the Cathedral porch. From all the streets leading towards the Cathedral came more gentry, ladies swathed in black and gentlemen in red, yellow, green, blue and purple silks, satins and velvets. All the wealth and fashion of Asuncion not already loitering and gossiping about the Plaza flocked into it or directly into the Cathedral.

Supported on either side by a mulatto servant, Don Cristobal de Maria came, walking feebly, but clean, handsomely attired in plum-coloured velvet and looking both well and happy.

Doña Juana Isquibel and her handsome grandson, having attended the second mass, were already in the Plaza.

Besides the gentry came from all directions swarms of women in *tupois*, and their ponchoed menfolk.

For, as Don Gumesindo, with his fifers and drummers, passed from street to street, far faster than he moved, ran about him and before him among all the populace, among the Guaranies who loved and worshipped Francia, the wild rumour that El Supremo had experienced a change of

heart, that his only fault was about to become a thing of the past, that the *Carai* had been reconciled to religion and was about to attend mass, that the *bando* signalled this marvel.

How this rumour originated was never so much as conjectured. It seemed to spring up among the commonalty in all quarters of the city at once.

Therefore, before mass began, the Cathedral was packed and a crush of peasantry stood close all about it.

They saw El Supremo appear on horseback from the direction of the Palacio, traverse the length of the Plaza at a slow walk, and dismount at the Cathedral entrance. They saw him stand there in talk with Doña Juana Isquibel and Don Beltran Jaray.

They saw emerge from Calle Concepcion, Don Gregorio de la Cerda, magnificent in his drab coat, Señorita Ventura Velarde on his arm, behind them Don Manuel and his wife. Doña Juanita wore a jet comb in her hair and Ventura one of carved tortoise shell, otherwise their garb was unaltered.

As they approached the porch, all onlookers saw the Dictator step forward, greet them, offer his arm to Ventura, saw her blush as she took it, saw Don Gregorio offer his arm to *Comadre* Juana, saw the two fall in behind Francia and Ventura, saw Don Manuel and his wife fall in behind them, saw the procession of six sweep into church.

All who could squeeze into the Cathedral followed, until it was jammed as never before.

Inside, Hawthorne, who had entered betimes, beheld the same subdivision as at the first mass into four areas of colour: dingy ponchos and dim *tupois* near the doors, sombre *rebozos* and gaudy court-costumes towards the altar.

The *tarimas*, save two only, had been pushed to the wall. Like their inferiors, the civil dignitaries, not only Don Basilio and Don Olegario, but Don Gumesindo himself and their women folk, knelt on the floor.

But the two remaining *tarimas* were set diagonally facing the altar and also facing each other, near the altar rail, and close to the middle line of the nave, where all could see them clearly. On that on the gospel side, above which the Madonna smiled, knelt Ventura between Doña Juana

Isquibel and Doña Juanita Bianquet: on the other knelt Francia, between Don Gregorio and Don Manuel.

The situation was plain to the meanest peon: the affronted ladies were accorded full atonement. Don Manuel knelt on the second *tarima* as sharing in the wrong done his wife and in the amends made: the others stood in a like relation to Ventura, her godmother and godfather, of course in the absence of her father, and, manifestly, El Supremo himself.

The explanation made from the altar at the proper time in the mass by Vicar-General Montiel himself and also by Padre Hermengildo, was wholly superfluous for any information it carried to any auditor; all comprehended before it was spoken.

Padre Lisardo had carried the host not merely to the sanctuary rail, but to the *tarima* on which the ladies knelt.

Both before and after communicating Ventura made a very pretty picture, demure, full of genuine piety, happy in her rehabilitation before all the people; but now and again flushing pink at the conspicuousness into which she had been forced, and full crimson at her juxtaposition to the Dictator.

When the congregation left the church the wild rumour of an hour before was wholly dead. Paraguayans were uncultured, maybe, but human. They knew that they had to do with no sudden conversion of their Dictator to religion. They recognised the motive that had brought him into church for the first time since his return from Cordova.

At the Cathedral doors Ventura saw among the crowd a hot, dusty horseman on a lathered mount. Under their all-concealing incrustation one could hardly perceive the spirit and breeding of the horse or the magnificence of his rider's equipment.

Ventura stared at the frank, handsome face, its beauty not a whit concealed by its coat of dust and tan. It seemed familiar, but its almost boyish youthfulness was oddly incongruous with the silver hair that floated above it in the fine long ringlets of a foppish gentleman.

The rider gazed at her but once. He sprang down and she found herself in the arms of her youngest uncle, Don Rupercio Velarde of Atirá.

After the kisses and embraces she queried:

"Why is not father here?"

"He is in serious anxiety," Don Lupercio answered gravely, "concerning the health of your stepmother."

He explained that he himself had been absent at Manumby.

When, next morning, Ventura set out for San Bernardino, as when the congregation and market throng dispersed together after the third mass, there was but one chief topic of conversation in Asuncion, from the *toldos* of the Payaguá Indians to the mansions of the Recaldes and Mayorgas and the rest of the gentry, and that was the probable future influence in Paraguayan affairs of Señorita Ventura Velarde.

## CHAPTER XXII

### RIDES AND PARTRIDGES

(1)

SUNDAY evening was mostly spent in arrangements for a partridge hunt. Don Bernardo supped at the Mayorga mansion and passed the evening in the *patio*, conversing chiefly about the Falkland Islands, called the Malvinas by the Spaniards.

He told at great length, and with a relish delightful to hear, of the wonderful strain of hunting dogs bred in those islands, the marvellous Malvinas pointers. Each of them, he claimed, was pointer, setter, Newfoundland dog, and water spaniel, all at once, and better than any of the four, exhibiting none of their defects and combining all their excellencies.

He narrated his first acquaintance with a Malvinas pointer, his determination to introduce the breed into Paraguay, the names of the island breeders, the names of the sea-captains who imported dogs for him, the pedigrees of the dogs imported, to the seventh generation, their names, the names of their descendants, to whom each had been given or sold, their histories, exploits and fates; all with so lively a gusto that his interest in the subject communicated itself to his listeners.

"Yes," Don Vicente remarked, "when a Malvinas pointer

has ranged a field you might stake your existence that in that field there is not one single bird."

"You can't beat a Malvinas pointer," Don Antonio added, "for scent, endurance, or courage."

"Nor yet," said Don Baltasar, "for sagacity and fidelity."

This last speech particularly pleased Don Bernardo and he proceeded to give many anecdotes of his dogs' intelligence and faithfulness.

As Don Baltasar and Don Antonio declared themselves too old and indolent for the fatigues of gunning, and as the younger men present all alleged various reasons why they could not join, it was decided that the party was to consist of Don Bernardo, Don Vicente and Hawthorne only.

Both Don Bernardo and Don Vicente favoured going partridge-shooting in the cool of the evening, after a comfortable dinner and a long siesta; but Hawthorne decided that having come to Asuncion on business he could not give that time of day to pleasure. To which considerations Don Bernardo gracefully acceded and agreed to expect his guests about sunrise.

"It will be all the same to me," he remarked. "I am always up and about before dawn."

Carmelo, after Bernardo had gone home, whispered to Hawthorne at the first opportunity:

"Father would not let me tell you, if he knew what I am doing, but I think you ought to understand. The reason why none of us would go is that the dear old boy would insist on every one of his party stopping in to breakfast with him on the way home. It would never do to hurt his feelings by refusing, and then he'd starve himself on half a meal a day for weeks to even up expenses."

"Is he as poor as that?" Hawthorne exclaimed.

"Bless his kind old heart!" said Carmelo, "he's as lavish when it comes to entertaining as when he was governor, offers just all he has without reserve or forethought. And he is really a pauper. After he abdicated, Benito positively refused to leave him. Don Bernardo insisted; said he could no longer afford a servant, that Benito could have his choice of affluent masters. Benito was hurt, asked if after thirty years' faithful service during his prosperity he

really meant to humiliate him by turning him off the moment he fell into adversity. He ended by bursting into tears.

"That was too much for Don Bernardo. He gave in.

"Benito rented for him that little house beyond the Convent of Mercy at the end of Calle Concepcion, and positively supported both of them out of his own savings for more than two years, telling his master that out of respect for him a general contribution had been subscribed to among all the old Spaniards. When his funds were exhausted, his purse almost empty, his last *maravedi* in sight, Benito did go the rounds of all the old Spaniards, in town and out, and levied contributions according to each one's income. He was very moderate, even parsimonious, and refused any sum above what he thought the least he could manage with. He refused lump sums from father, Don Antonio and both the Casals. They all put themselves down for as much as Benito would accept, even Don Toribio sends his contribution every quarter from San Bernardino, though he has never been to town since the first *junta* took over the government.

"Even some of the Creoles contribute. Old Gumesindo waylaid Benito and insisted on subscribing.

"'You are his enemy,' said Benito.

"'Never enemy,' said Gumesindo, who is really a good sort, 'say "adversary" if you must. We are opposed in politics; my conscience compels me to side with the patriots. But I was never his antagonist except in a discussion. Most of all he was good to me when he was Intendente and I a mere cattle-breeder's lad. Let me express my gratitude by contributing my quota.'

"And Benito consented.

"The old man was always used to leaving everything to Benito, and continues to do so without after-thought. He is always inviting friends to breakfast or dine. Benito has passed the word round that it must never be more than three at once, and that seldom. Once a week is as often as his exchequer will stand a guest to a meal and once a month is often enough for two together. We all understand and steer as close to declining altogether as his cronies can without offending him. Bless his dear old heart!"

## (2)

Hawthorne and Don Vicente found Don Bernardo not only awake and dressed, but ready to mount. His long Biscayan fowling-piece with its damascened barrel, carved, silver-mounted butt and conspicuous lock, was in his hands, oiled and loaded; his Malvinas pointer frisked about his feet; Benito held his mule and his master's horse ready saddled at the door.

There was a delay over the Malvinas pointers. Hawthorne admired them: small-sized they were to be sure, but beautiful dogs, their liver-coloured coats sleek and fine, their faces full of intelligence, their ears long and silky. At his expressions of commendation the old man must needs tell their names, pedigrees, qualities, history and exploits at some length.

Once in the saddle and their three servants on muleback behind them, a short canter, the dogs scampering along before or behind them, brought them to fields promising excellently for their sport. There they set off on foot, leaving the grooms holding their mounts, and within two hours had bagged a round three dozen brace of quail among them.

Returned to Don Bernardo's humble dwelling, with its roof of split palm-trunks, they breakfasted in his neat living-room, at a table whose worn cloth was of linen as white as any snow, which was set with silver utensils barely sufficient for the three, and with a cut-glass carafe of sparkling water.

The wine stood on a small sideboard, and, when both his guests declined it, Don Bernardo remarked:

"If you will have none, neither shall I."

The breakfast was merely *maté*, milk, *chipá* and fruit; Benito waiting with the practised grace of a life-long butler, with the respectful demeanour of a born servant, with the reverent attention of a domestic who adored his master.

After the leisurely meal was despatched, Don Bernardo, with the liveliest expressions of pleasure, exhibited his pet humming-birds. There were a half-dozen cages of these tiny creatures hanging around the room. He opened all the cages at once and Benito, unordered, brought a glass of

clear white syrup and some small quills. Although every cage door was wide and the little wine glass of syrup in plain sight of every bird, not a bird left its perch until their master gave the signal.

Then, in an instant, the room was full of whirring wings and tiny shapes of emerald, ruby and sapphire tints. They flew about his ears, buzzed and fluttered about his head and hands; two at once poised there, sipped nectar from his lips where the dipped quill had touched them; others quaffed syrup from the quills he held in his fingers. It was a charming sight and the old man's pleasure in his pets was more captivating than the spectacle, which Don Bernardo terminated by repeating the signal. At that the flock dispersed, each bird to its own cage.

(3)

Amid the customary profusion upon the Mayorga dining-table roast quail appeared conspicuously that day. While Hawthorne was enjoying one a message was brought him from the Palacio, requesting his presence as soon as convenient after the siesta hour, to accompany the Dictator on his afternoon ride.

When Hawthorne reached the Government House he found Francia under the orange trees in the fore-court, where he had first seen him. He was wearing his large silver spurs over his low shoes, as when he dismounted at Itapuá, white silk stockings, buff cord trousers, buff waistcoat, and his blue General's uniform coat, to the left breast of which was affixed a sort of decoration like an order, something between a breast-knot and a star; its centre of rich embroidery, from which radiated and depended inter-twisted tri-colour ribbons. Across his breast, from his right shoulder, slanted a broad sash of bright satin, its colour that startling tint locally known as patriots' blue, at once dark and brilliant, making the cloth of his uniform coat look dingy and faded by comparison. Its ends were finished off by tassels of as intensely blue a cord, picked out with gold. He was girt with his big cavalry sabre. In his hand he carried a yellow malacca cane, with a gold head and black silk tassel. His cocked hat was very



big and black and set off by a stiff red feather and a tri-colour cockade.

This overplus of incongruous finery jarred on Hawthorne as unworthy of the man, but he forgot all about it the moment Francia spoke; his manner, no matter how trifling his utterance, was always that of a born ruler.

"Señor Don Guillermo," he said, when the greetings and snuff-taking were done with, "I have sent for you because I wish to show you my barracks and have you present at a review of my troops. I asked you to come on foot as I wished to have the pleasure of seeing you ride one of my horses. Of them I give you your choice. What sort of horse do you prefer to ride?"

"Any kind of rideable horse will suit me," Hawthorne replied easily.

"Such a horse as Don Beltran rode when I first saw him?" Francia queried slyly.

"Beltran," Hawthorne said, "is a better horseman than I shall ever be, especially in his Castilian grace and a sort of ease of a nobleman born. But I could never have kept up with San Martin in Cuyo nor with Bolivar in Granada if I were not capable of riding any horse once thrown and saddled."

"I can mount you on a more intractable animal than Don Beltran rode, if you like," Francia suggested.

"I have no objection to showing you what I can do with a vicious horse," was Hawthorne's answer, "but I should prefer trying him in the open rather than in a cramped Plaza with narrow streets leading out of it. Suppose I ride some quiet animal to the barracks; try there, before or after the review, any beast you select; and ride him on our return."

"Capital!" Francia exclaimed, calling loudly, "Bopî!"

When the boy came he gave his orders in Guarani.

Hawthorne found himself horsed on a manageable though spirited dapple-grey, girthed with a new saddle of European pattern. Francia rode a tall black stallion. His saddle was of the local fashion, high-peaked, silver-edged and cornered, covered with crimson velvet, with huge crimson velvet holsters and a long, tube-like holder for his malacca cane. From the holsters projected the butts of two large double-barrelled pistols.

They rode, Hawthorne at Francia's left stirrup, twelve lancers behind him, across the Jesuits' bridge, past the Dominican Monastery, across its plaza where the boys had chivied El Zapo, along the sinuous irregularities of Calle Santo Domingo, past the long wall of the prison, around the church of the Incarnation, and through a tangle of shaded lanes to the barrack field, which extended, rolling, green and treeless, all about the barracks: long, low, tile-roofed buildings lining three sides of a more or less rectangular drill-ground, very dusty and glaring, along the west side of which stood some thatched stables, roughly completing the rectangle. There was a large horse-corral of palm-stakes and hide-rope at the further corner.

Some two thousand troops turned out for review: about four hundred infantry, four hundred mulatto lancers, and the rest cavalry of the usual South American type, as to men and horses, but less formidable in personal appearance and better uniformed than any troops Hawthorne had seen on the continent.

The infantry were barefoot. The rest wore *potro*-boots, which means "colt-boots." Except the dignitaries and rich of the cities, all mankind in the Rio de la Plata region at that time either went barefoot or wore *potro*-boots. These were made by killing a colt, severing the feet at the fetlock joint, making a circular slash all round each leg close to the body, peeling the skin off downwards like the finger of a tight glove turned inside out, tanning and suppling the funnel-shaped tubes of hide, and further manipulating them into a very comfortable and durable pair of boots, of which the heels were formed by the bend at the hock. The better sort had the lower ends brought together and sewed up; most Gauchos left the toes open. The boots of Francia's cavalry had shaped toes.

The uniforms did not vary much. White trousers, not very clean, and red waistcoats, much faded, were universal. The lancers wore foraging caps and white coat-jackets or jacket-coats. The rest wore round hats and blue coats, the cavalry with braid along the seams of the back.

The infantry went through the manual of arms with more or less of an approximation to accuracy and promptness, and performed some simple evolutions, without much unevenness of line and with no confusion.

The inspection was after the evolutions, and the Dictator dismounted and walked along the ranks. With his own hand he seized and wrenched out of line and threw flat in the dust two delinquents. The first, for a belt worn awry, he sentenced to ten lashes and ten days in the public prison; the second, for a stain on his coat, to double as much of each.

Remounting, Francia inspected the lancers and cavalry, every man of whom had in good order his uniform, weapons and his *recado*, that complication of gear, so astonishing to a foreigner, so efficient in use, with which every South American horseman loaded his mount; a nearly entire ox-hide covering the horse almost from withers to croup, to keep his sweat from the rider's gear; a saddle like a pack saddle, high-peaked before and behind; both hide and saddle cinched to the horse by a strong girth fastened by thongs passed through a ring-bolt; over the saddle worsted quilts and cotton quilts and blankets, one over the other; above them a cover of cool, tough, soft leather; uppermost and outside all a very broad girth of fine, tough webbing: the whole, with his poncho, providing a campaigner with bedding, coverings, awnings, shelter in down-pours of rain, and all needed protection to keep him fit to travel and fight.

During the inspection Hawthorne rode by the Dictator. 'After it was over Francia said:

"Now you shall see something worth seeing. Just go with Marcelino." And he called a captain and gave him some rapid orders in Guarani, introducing him as Don Marcelino Sanabria.

With him Hawthorne galloped off between the stables into a considerable expanse of open country, more or less level, but dipping into broad shallow hollows and diversified by long swells and low knolls.

On one of these Hawthorne and his guide took their stand and presently saw the entire body of cavalry come forth from the parade-ground, the Dictator, naked sabre in hand, at their head.

When they neared the knoll, Francia stood up in his stirrups, turned his head, and shouted:

"*¡A paso lento!*"

At once all slowed to a walk.

Presently he gave the command:

"*A paso redoblado*," and all resumed the canter at which they had left the drill-yard. At that pace they dashed round the knoll, swept round in a wide circle, and came on again as before.

Then Francia gave the order:

"*Cárguen á galope!*"

At the sound they broke into full gallop and charged past, tearing along, every sabre waving, Francia leading with boyish pleasure.

Out of the dust-cloud of their distant progress emerged Francia, riding alone towards his guest. He ranged himself on the knoll between Hawthorne and Captain Sana-bria, who promptly reined his horse back two lengths. The three then watched the squadron return at a canter.

In the drill-ground Francia called:

"Montufar!"

When the captain had come close he asked:

"Don Luis, how did that idiot come to fall?"

"His horse," said Montufar, "stumbled over a charred trunk of a palm."

"Which man was it?" Francia queried.

At the answer, "Ramon Benítez," he scowled, and snarled:

"Show me any man whose name ends in -ez and I show you a bungler, a coward or a fool. They are all alike and most of them scoundrels to boot! Fetch the dolt here!"

When the wretched trooper was before him he berated him, concluding:

"You can neither manage a horse, nor find your feet when you throw it from under you. You shall have fifty-five lashes and three months in prison. At the end of that time you shall have one day to get out of my sight. If I ever set eyes on you I'll have you shot."

The ranks dismissed, Francia said:

"Now, I'll show you some of my best riders and worst horses."

There followed a stirring exhibition of lassoing specified beasts from the corral, saddling and riding them. At the end of it Hawthorne did as well as the best of the riders, and, after his mount was tamed under him, cantered back

alongside of Francia, whose face wore a lively expression of pleasure.

"Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "my respect for you increases. Do you wish to ride that horse through the city as you proposed?"

"He'll give me no more serious trouble," Hawthorne said. "But I doubt if I can keep a barely-broken colt like this alongside of you. He half bolts every few minutes."

"Ride ahead then," Francia said, "if you must."

"Do you mean it?" Hawthorne could not help exclaiming.

"I usually mean what I say," Francia snapped, adding, in a milder tone: "Etiquette must yield to horse-flesh!"

And they set off, the twelve lancers some distance in the rear.

They returned by a roundabout way, at first through a labyrinth of green lanes south-eastwards from the barracks, then into Calle de la Merced.

The westward wall of the Convent of Mercy was blank whitewash, doorless and windowless, at the top of a low grass bank. Facing the Convent and the bank across the narrow street was an isolated house, decidedly of the better class. About twenty yards nearer than the corner of the house a white barrel stood by the roadside.

At this Hawthorne's mount shied violently, and, curbed in his efforts to bolt, began to rear, kick, buck and make every other kind of effort by which a vicious horse tries to unseat his rider.

Hawthorne, all his attention on the horse, paid none to the roadway. But his experience on the plains of Granada and Cuyo had trained his muscles to act before his mind realised what he was doing.

When the frantic brute's forelegs vanished into a hole in the road, as if they had broken through the covering of a well, Hawthorne leapt clear, Gaucho-fashion, and landed on his feet, as the horse crashed over, the bones of both forelegs snapped off.

Francia reined up and gazed at the widening hole into which the struggling, screaming beast was steadily sinking. He spoke first over his shoulder in Guarani to one of the lancers.

The man dismounted, set his pistol to the horse's head, and put it out of its misery.

Then Francia spoke in French:

"Monsieur Atorno, do you think it probable that this highway came into this condition by accident?"

"It is manifestly a trap," Hawthorne affirmed, also speaking French, "a trap clumsily conceived but laid with care and cunning."

"A trap for whom?" Francia demanded.

"You can answer that question better than I," Hawthorne retorted.

"My answer," Francia said, still in French, "is that, to my thinking, this perhaps makes three times. You seem to have been sent to Paraguay for my personal benefit."

He turned to the lancers and gave rapid orders in Guarani. Six of them at once burst into the house and returned with Don José Carisimo.

"Señor Don José," said Francia silkily, "when I rode past your house last Friday afternoon I noticed the gutter out of repair. I sent you word to have it made right. Next morning I issued a permit for the tearing up of the roadway. Your workmen, I was told, were at work late at night.

"I was pleased at your zeal. I am not pleased at the intention of your zeal, now I have discovered its object. As a result of your workmen's activity the roadway past your house is in a state menacing to the safety of passers-by. I am displeased. You shall have time to think the matter over in the public prison."

He gave more swift orders in Guarani and the lancers promptly secured Don José on a horse and hurried him off, two before him, one on each side of him on foot, and two behind him.

On the spare horse left by the second of the lancers who had walked by Don José Hawthorne finished his ride.

(4)

At the Government House Francia remarked:

"Distraction from worry is my chief need. Would it be imposing on you to ask you to do penance a third time?"

"No imposition on me," Hawthorne smiled. "Nor any penance to me. I like your fare."

As they paced under the orange trees by the garden-wall, Francia staring down the thick bushes on the steep bank at the lagoon, spoke suddenly.

"You see the sort of ingratitude I meet with from all the old Spaniards!"

Before Hawthorne could reply he spoke again:

"But I must not spoil your relish with my troubles. Let us talk of pleasanter matters."

Towards the end of the meal Hawthorne remarked:

"What you need is not laborious conversation. Let us absorb ourselves in chess."

He won three short games and Francia commented:

"These hot northerly winds always make me nervous, fidgety and bad tempered. I am ready to brain you for beating me fairly when I am too strung-up to play decently. I hate the city in weather like this and yearn for the country. Let us talk instead of beginning another game."

"I should rather suggest," Hawthorne replied, "that I take my leave, with your permission."

"Am I such bad company?" Francia smiled. "I suppose I am. The permission shall then be granted after you answer me one question. I want advice. What do you advise about Don José?"

"I ought not to advise," Hawthorne answered.

"Pay me the compliment," Francia scowled, "of assuming that I have considered and waived any reasons for your not advising."

"I then advise," Hawthorne said, "that he be merely kept in prison until you have evidence to convict him. If convicted he should be shot. If no evidence can be found he should be released upon payment of the largest fine you can squeeze out of his estate. He knows he is guilty and will pay anything to get off."

Francia sighed.

"You talk so lightly of shooting people," he said, "and more lightly of eliciting evidence. Evidence against an old Spaniard cannot be got except by torture. Torture I am loath to employ. No one has been tortured in Paraguay since Espinosa's death. Torture was expressly de-

clared illegal by the first convention and at my suggestion. All the Intendentes used torture to extort confessions till mild old Don Bernardo came here. But already the usage of two centuries and a half is forgotten in ten years. If I use torture I shall be execrated as the inventor of devilish tyrannies.

"No, I shall find no evidence.

"And I had myself thought of a staggering fine as the best solution. Don José is too big a fool to be dangerous, and the state has therefore nothing to gain by casting him into a dungeon to rot. He is only a cat's-paw anyhow, and, as I said, I cannot hope to reach the men who egged him on. At large he will originate no serious mischief."

(5)

At the Mayorga mansion Hawthorne found Beltran the centre of an animated group in the *patio*. All rose as he entered.

"Here you are at last!" Beltran exclaimed. "I've been waiting for you since a mere moment after you left. I came in to take you partridge shooting."

"I went partridge shooting at sunrise," Hawthorne exclaimed.

"You did just right," Beltran replied. "It is ideal weather for partridges and they are plentiful. Come on with me to Itapuá and shoot more to-morrow morning."

"You tempt me," said Hawthorne.

"You have sense," Beltran smiled. "I was convinced you would agree. So were Don Bernardo and Don Vicente. They rode out to dinner with Grandmother and will be ready to start with us at dawn. The horses are already saddled. I've kept them standing ever since I came."

As they rode through the tepid moonlight he remarked, sniffing:

"It smells to me as if we might have a change of wind. Strange we've had no rain with this."

(6)

Hawthorne, dressing in the first glimmer of dawn, realised that a south-west wind had blown away the enervating



mugginess of the past few days and revived the cooled and cleaned atmosphere.

In the *patio* he found Don Bernardo and Don Vicente already dressed and holding their fowling-pieces. Watching them, every muscle aquiver at sight of the guns, all eagerness, all well-trained repression, four Malvinas pointers waited about, twitching with suppressed impatience.

When Beltran joined them they had breakfast, a mere gourd of *maté* apiece, a bit of *chipá* bread and a cup of chocolate, all handed about on trays by the mulatto servants, one of whom brought in two fine new English bird-guns for Beltran and Hawthorne.

Outside four mulatto grooms held as many horses, two bays with English pig-skin saddles, a tall roan, and a taller dapple-grey, girthed with old-fashioned peninsular, high-peaked saddles, one of green velvet, the other of crimson plush.

When the gentlemen had mounted, the four grooms, each with his master's gun, swung themselves on their cream-coloured mules. As the last human being was astride the four pointers gave vent to a single simultaneous bark of ecstasy and set off at an incredible rate of speed, tearing along belly to earth, with prodigious bounds, thenceforth silent as before. Presently, after a wide cast ahead, they came back, circled about the horses and tore off again, repeating the manoeuvre as long as their masters were in the saddle.

When they started their brief canter the light was still too dim to follow the dogs with their eyes to the limit of each loop of their excursions; by the time they dismounted, merely a few minutes later, and scarcely a mile from Doña Juana's, the dawn was rapidly brightening.

They reined up under some overarching, feathery locust trees in a grass-grown, little-used lane. Dismounting, Beltran briefly ordered the servants to wait their return without moving from the spot. Each of the four tucked his gun under his arm and, carefully avoiding thorns, they slid cautiously through a narrow gap in a tall cactus hedge. Hawthorne, gazing about, found himself in a big field, long kept under grass, and so pastured down that it was weed-grown and full of clumps of bushes, between which the

cropped herbage was short and easy to walk over. It sloped up every way from where they stood, so that they seemed at the bottom of a big shallow half bowl.

Don Vicente, gazing about also, remarked:

"So this is where you have brought us!"

"Yes," Beltran replied. "All this land gets fuller and fuller of partridges every year. I found that out the day after I reached home."

"True," Don Bernardo observed, "being practically deserted. But I wish you had gone somewhere else. I do not like the idea."

"Nonsense!" Beltran laughed cheerfully. "He never objects to any one hunting over it. I made sure of that."

They spread out and began to trudge up the hill, the dogs ranging the field, careering and dashing about, insane with delight in the open air, the morning dew, and the prospect of game. Hawthorne was amazed at their tireless running and astonishing quickness. Also he was more than a little surprised at the very respectable figure Don Vicente made as a gunner. His plumpness hindered him not a particle; he seemed not to notice the weight of his gun, and he stepped out briskly.

The dogs ranged the entire field without coming to a point.

The upper rim of the field was a ridge topped all along by a formidable prickly-pear hedge. This they followed, seeking in vain for a gap, the dogs keeping close to them. When at last they found an opening and edged their way through, they saw the dawn glowing over a beautiful prospect of wooded ridges, verdant valleys, grassy slopes, hollows green with brakes of cane, maize-fields edged with orange-groves, and meadows ribboned with silvery brooks. The field which they had entered was much like that they had left, old pasture, but with no cattle or other living things anywhere visible. Not far off, to their right, a cottage roof appeared among some orange trees.

The dogs, scattering up and down the hedge, checked in their long, loping gait, and the four came to a point almost simultaneously.

Six birds whirled up and each gunner brought one down.

Hawthorne, watching the dogs, marvelled at the pertin-

acity with which one retrieved his bird from an exceptionally close and thorny thicket where the cactus hedge broadened to a dense and impenetrable clump.

A trifle farther down the slope of the field they secured three more birds.

"I told you to bring one of the servants, at least," Mayorga remarked.

"I like the independence of doing without them," Beltran replied. "Guillermo and I have both learned to carry anything portable that strikes our fancy."

He slung four of the partridges into his bag and Hawthorne similarly took charge of the other three. By the time they had crossed the field they had a full dozen birds.

Under the first orange tree near the cottage Mayorga paused.

"I don't like to go nearer, Beltran," he said.

"Nonsense," Beltran argued. "It's the best place for birds anywhere about here. The dwarf is almost the only negro in Paraguay that is not afraid of him and dares to take liberties. *Ama Fruela* told me all about him. He's a chartered liar, scarcely makes a pretence of caring for the place, and six nights out of seven sleeps at his mother's. The house is as empty as a ruin. No place for birds like a deserted, weed-grown orchard and garden."

They squirmed through a break in the low hedge, and almost immediately the dogs put up a covey of birds. Four tumbled.

While the dogs were nosing about for them Hawthorne regarded the cottage; low, palm-thatched, evidently once neat and trim, now picturesque in neglect. A little plant with purple flowers waved in the dawn wind, bright in the rays of the new risen sun, sprouting from the decayed thatch. The adobe walls were streaked and rain-washed. Weeds grew up in the cracks of the brick pavement under the little portico. The door was fast, the windows shuttered close.

Conning the house and unconsciously treading a pace or two nearer to it, Hawthorne stubbed his toe on a rotting log half hidden in the weed-grown grass. Recovering himself and turning from his inspection he saw Don Bernardo and Don Vicente staring at the cottage with a sort of awe. Beltran was some paces off taking a bird from the mouth

of one of the dogs. In answer to Hawthorne's questioning look Don Bernardo explained:

"This is where *he* lived before——" his voice trailed off.

"Is this Ibirai?" Hawthorne queried sharply.

Don Vicente nodded.

The dogs cannily circled the house, keeping to the right, and put up bird after bird. His comrades bagged a full dozen more, but Hawthorne shot none. He was staring at the cottage, wondering under which window Francia had found the corpses of the infant and its way-worn mother.

But when they had made the full circuit through the riotous weeds, and a partridge whirred up right before him, not two rods from the corner of the house, he aimed instinctively and winged it neatly.

As it came to the ground a voice spoke from under the portico of the cottage.

"*Buen tiro!*"

"Good shot indeed," said Hawthorne before he looked round. "Thank you for the compliment."

But when he glanced over his shoulder he stiffened in every muscle, as petrified as his dazed companions.

Under the corridor stood Francia.

His jet black hair, showing no trace of ever having been powdered, combed back from his bold, white forehead, fell in long, natural ringlets over his shoulders, upon his gracefully draped scarlet *capote*, from under which showed a simple scholar's suit of plain black set off only by large gold buckles on his low shoes and at the knees of his breeches and by an old silver-hilted sabre in a black leather sheath. He held in one hand a large two-handled silver *maté* cup. The fingers of the other held a cigar. Beside him stood a hideous little negro dwarf, bandy-legged, hump-backed, his seamed and knotted face showing one yellow eye, huge and rolling.

For an instant the four sportsmen stared agape.

Then Don Vicente and Don Bernardo essayed to speak, both at once. Each failed, Mayorga's choked gurgle, the ex-Intendente's deprecating murmur, dying off into silence.

Beltran spoke easily.

"Excelentísimo Señor, pardon us. We had no idea we were intruding upon you. We fancied the house empty save for its guardian."

"Perhaps even of its guardian, eh?" Francia retorted, eyeing the dwarf.

There was an instant of silence.

"Well," Francia continued. "No harm is done. You need not apologise and I expect no apologies. You were quite justified in coming here to shoot partridges and I make you welcome. Sit down and have some *maté*."

The dwarf carried out chairs of the high-backed, hide-bottomed local pattern; the fortuitous guests seated themselves. One dutiful dog fetched the last bird to Beltran and then all four curled up under or near the chairs.

When the dwarf brought a tray with a steaming urn, gourds, *bombillas* and *yerba* he offered it first to Beltran.

"Bopî!" Francia admonished him sharply and motioned towards Don Bernardo.

As the waddling dwarf corrected his mistake Hawthorne remarked: "Another Bopî."

"Yes," Francia agreed, "and has lost no sheep"; adding, in English, in the dumbfounded silence that ensued:

"Let them alone  
And they weel come home  
Breenging their tails behind thaym."

The constrained silence deepened.

So mute, they heard hoof-beats of a dozen horses galloping, galloping towards them along the road. Into the lane they swung, up to the cottage they charged at top speed, just clear of the corridor-eaves they halted, reined back on their haunches, steaming and smoking; on their backs, twelve lancers, each with a carbine slung by his boot-leg.

Lieutenant Rivarola was with them.

Lieutenant Rivalora looked distinctly relieved.

"We heard the shots——" he began.

Francia stood up, his figure instantly rigid, his eyes blazing. "You heard the shots!" he echoed. "You have good ears. You must have been a full mile away.

"You heard the shots, indeed! They were shots aimed at partridges; shots fired by my loyal friends. But that is no thanks to you. As far as you are concerned those shots might have been musket-shots, shots aimed at my

heart, shots fired by traitors. As far as you are concerned I might be dead already. For all you have done to protect me I am a dead man this moment. You heard the shots indeed!"

Rivarola opened his mouth to speak.

"Silence, fool!" Francia hissed. "The facts convict you. Words cannot alter the facts. Shots or no shots, you were to be here before sunrise. The sun rose nearly an hour ago. Look at it!"

He pointed his long finger at the sun.

Rivarola slewed his head round and peered at the sun with half a sneer.

Francia flew into a rage.

"This is once too often, sir," he almost whispered. "Your incompetence and your insolence I have borne too often already. Dismount!"

Rivarola came instantly to the salute.

"Don Ernesto!" Francia snapped. "Your sword!"

When he had it in his hands he spoke in Guarani:

"Ramon! Pablo! José! Dismount and tether your horses."

When the horses were hobbled and tethered he ordered:

"Pinion his arms!"

When Rivarola was trussed he again addressed the peons.

"Come here!"

"Let me see your cartridges!"

He counted over those in each bandolier.

"Use but one apiece!" he admonished them. "When you catch up I shall count them again. If more than one be missing, I'll have you shot also. That log over there" (gesturing towards where Hawthorne had stubbed his toe) "will suffice for a *banquillo*. Do not shoot him till we are all out of sight. Make sure he is dead and then bury him at once. If you do not overtake us before we reach the city ride in at a walk and report at once to me."

Rivarola stood mute, his stolid face mottled red and white.

The four sportsmen had stood up as Francia leapt to his feet. They had stood tense and mute during this unexpected scene. Not one of them had noticed Bopî slip noiselessly among them and fasten both big silver spurs over his master's low shoes.

"Sorry to mar our chat," Francia uttered. "But discipline must be maintained."

Beltran and Hawthorne shouldered their birds and all four intruders bowed themselves off. Even as he acknowledged their farewells Francia swung himself into the saddle of the horse Bopî had silently led from somewhere nearby, and gave a brief order to his lancers. The ten horses clattered off down the lane before the gentlemen had passed the hedge.

Out in the field the pointers raced again, came to a point, and put up each his bird.

To their bewilderment no one so much as aimed at the whirring game.

The four men trudged in silence.

Half way up the hill three musket-shots rang out almost as one.

Don Bernardo bowed his head, sank on one knee into the attitude most of the men had assumed in the Cathedral the previous Sunday, and recited the prayers for the dying.

The others uncovered likewise and repeated the responses whenever he paused, Hawthorne, who had long ago learned the prayers current in Spanish America, chiming in with Beltran and Mayorga.

When the ex-Intendente stood up Don Vicente remarked:

"A terrible man! who would have dreamed it when he was a mere *tinterillo*! What a thunderbolt!"

"Simon Bolivar is almost such another," said Hawthorne.

"He reminds me of the Emperor," Beltran added. "The same decision, the same ruthlessness, the same promptness."

"Perhaps it was my duty to my fellow-Spaniards," Don Bernardo spoke, "perhaps it was my duty to my King, perhaps it was my duty to my God to exhibit such prompt and ruthless decision. If so I humble myself before my Maker and beg his forgiveness, ask pardon of my King, crave indulgence from my fellow men. But were I to know never so surely that I must suffer ten thousand years of purgatory, that I must burn in hell forever, yet could I not compass such inexorable harshness. And, I thank God, whatever my duty was, whatever my remissness has been, that he created me as I am and not as that man."

**BOOK III**  
**VENTURA**





## CHAPTER XXIII

### LOCALITIES AND CHARACTERS

#### (1)

**A**SUNCION, as it is to-day, stands on the site, or more than the site, which has been called by that name since 1536. But the old Asuncion, as it still was in 1816, has vanished almost as completely as the lost Atlantis.

To be sure, the building in which the Post-office and Telegraph Departments are now officed, called from them *Correos y Telegrafos*, is the very old Palacio or Cabildo of Francia's Asuncion, scarcely altered from what it was when Hawthorne saw it or from what it may have been in Irala's time, if indeed, as legend had it, Irala was its builder. Also the body of the Cathedral is mainly as it was a hundred years ago, though the squab tower then at its south-west corner was torn down more than fifty years ago, to make way for the present hideous façade with its two belfries.

But no other building from those days survives to these. The church of San Roque stands, to-day, just where the same saint's church stood then, but it is not the same building, and the church of the Incarnation is not only a modern structure but is situated at some distance from the location of the old *Iglesia de la Encarnacion*.

The noble amphitheatre of low hills sloping towards the river has been little altered by the rudimentary attempts at grading common to most South American municipalities. But it now faces a broad, shallowish lagoon opening westwards into the shrunken stream of the River Paraguay, which has, in the past century, carved for itself a new channel in a curve swinging considerably to the northwest. Hawthorne, gazing northward where now extends the sluggish lagoon, saw the stately Rio Paraguay, its mighty current running full three miles an hour, sweep majestically past the city's waterfront, spreading more than a thousand yards of its placid surface between the capital of the re-

# EL SUPREMO

ASUNCION, PARAGUAY, IN 1809

FROM THE PLAN GIVEN BY FELIX DE AZARA IN "VOYAGES DANS  
L'AMÉRIQUE MÉRIDIONALE"



REFERENCES IN AZARA'S PLAN OF ASUNCION  
TO LOCALITIES MENTIONED IN THE  
NARRATIVE

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- A Mayorga's House.
- B Recalde's House.
- C Velarde's House.
- D The Barracks.
- E The Public Prison.
- F Casal's House.
- G Estagarribia's House.
- H Bargas' Wine-shop.
- J El Zapo's Cottage.
- K The Plaza.
- L The Old Palacio, also called the Cabildo.
- M The Palacio.
- N The Riachuelo, the inlet lagoon.
- O The Dominican Convent.
- P The Franciscan Convent.
- Q The Convent of Mercy.
- R The Encarnacion Church.
- S The Cathedral.

public and the wild further bank from which began the savage wildernesses of the Gran Chaco.

The river-front of the lagoon as it now exists is much further out than the bold, low bluffs formerly lining the bathing-shore, wharfage-quay and anchorage along the strong-flowing Rio Paraguay. The Jesuits' bridge, the inlet-lagoon whose neck it spanned, the brook that flowed into it, crossed by three small stone bridges, the stretches of swamp, marsh, bog and slough that extended from the brook, drained into it and the inlet-lagoon, and formed together with them the "*Riachuelo*" of those days: these have all but disappeared, dried up, filled in or graded over. Scarcely a trace remains of them.

The rectilinear avenues of the modern city had not then been laid off, surveyed nor so much as thought of. Asuncion alone of the considerable cities of the continent had come into being before the decree of a King at Madrid imposed upon all towns of Spanish America one unvarying pattern of square Plaza and gridiron of streets and had escaped remodelling to the same monotonous rectangular uniformity. Old Asuncion had never been laid off; it had grown at haphazard, as the trails radiating from Irala's entrenched and stockaded fortress grew to be highways, and the cross-tracks between them developed into roads; as the *estancias* about the capital of the Intendencia split up into *chacar*as and the *chacar*as divided and subdivided into market-garden farms and house-gardens; as the boundary-outlines defining the properties and the paths connecting them determined their location; so there grew up in the suburbs a network of winding lanes which, nearer the Plaza, became, in time, crooked streets. Straightish streets there were but three: Calle Espinosa, on which Dr Bargas' wine-shop fronted, leading from nowhere to nowhere, from the frayed fringe of slough at the head of the *Riachuelo* rivulet to the forking bog at the head of the long marsh feeding Payaguá Brook; Calle Pombal, nearly parallel to it, past the rear wall of Dr. Bargas' property; and Calle Comercio, with its line of shop-corridors along the south-west side of the Cathedral Plaza. Not a yard of these was paved. The beginning of Calle Concepcion, where it started from the Cathedral Plaza at right angles to Calle Comercio, was straightish for about a hundred yards, but it

thereafter became even more tortuous than most of the streets, and after winding for half a mile suddenly ceased at a cross-lane behind the convent of the Mercedarios.

The military barracks were far out of town somewhere between the modern locations of the *Plaza de los Patricios* and the Mangrullo Cemetery. The suburban lanes were mere cart-tracks between cactus or aloe hedges overshadowed by orange trees. Few dwellings stood close to any, and those in the gardens were mostly two-room hovels, their roofs and those of their tiny porticoes thatched with palm-leaves.

The huts of the better class of labourers, the small houses of the artisans were generally roofed with split-palm trunks laid the under layer hollow up, the upper layer curve up, interlocking like roof-tiles. These, like the hovels, were all mud-floored.

The scattered houses in the suburbs mostly stood well back from the lanes, with orange or palm trees about them. But some faced immediately on the road-ways, so that the front door of each main apartment opened under the portico directly on the highway. Nearer the centre of the town these jostled each other and formed irregular, sinuous or curving streets. Such were tile-roofed. Not a full dozen mansions in the entire city had *azoteas*, flat roofs to which the dwellers resorted on hot nights, and of which they were justly proud. There were then in all Asuncion but five really fine private residences built around generous *patios*: the disused and shuttered Casal mansion on Calle Espinosa and Calle Pombal occupying a square to itself next Dr. Bargas' property: the former Rodriguez mansion next the convent of the Mercedarios, then owned and occupied by Don Gumesindo Estagarribia; the Recalde and Mayorga houses more or less between the Mercedarios and the Franciscans, and the closed and almost abandoned Velarde mansion next the Franciscan monastery. The abodes of the Figueredos, Jovellanoses, Echagües, and the rest of the gentry, much as they thought of themselves, were cramped, and, at most, on two sides only of their court-yards.

The four monasteries: the Recoletanos further out of town southeastward than the barracks were southwestward, the Mercedarios to the south of the Plaza, the Franciscans

southeastwards, the Dominicans southwestwards by the river-bank, were, like the private houses, tile-roofed and of one story only, though the most imposing and extensive buildings in the city except the Cabildo and Palacio.

The Palacio, now vanished to the last foundation stone, stood where now are the really beautiful cavalry barracks. It occupied altogether a space of ground fully a hundred and fifty yards by a hundred yards. Besides the garden along the inlet-lagoon where Francia and Hawthorne supped under the orange trees and a walled-off kitchen-yard next it further up the inlet, it had four *patios*: the fore-court with the twelve orange trees where Francia transacted business in fair weather; the larger court behind that, the buildings about which Francia used as his chief arsenal; the tiny kitchen *patio* between the arsenal-court and the kitchen garden; and the small *patio* on the other side of the arsenal-court, towards the Cabildo, which Espinosa had turned into a tobacco-warehouse and cigar factory. The portion of the Palacio surrounding this courtyard was all of two stories and its *alto* or second story, the only *alto* in Asuncion, had windows, not only inwards, giving on the court, but also outwards; those on the long side looking southeastward over the roof of the Cabildo; the single one facing northeastward toward the river opening on that mirador-balcony, commanding the whole Plaza, which Hawthorne had noticed as he approached the Palacio for his first visit to Francia and which overhung the window at which Francia had been accustomed to give night audiences.

As the Jesuits had been not only large-idea'd in respect to extent of ground-plan, but also builders for solidity, the Palacio, with its yard garden, four *patios* and the quondam Jesuit church at the east corner converted into a grand *sala*, was far and away the most impressive building in the capital.

(2)

With Asuncion as he found it, Hawthorne proceeded to make himself thoroughly acquainted, mostly in rides with Carmelo. For Hawthorne liked him better than either of his elder brothers. Carmelo talked little and seldom did or said anything definitely likable. Yet he was a most

likable youth and an excellent companion, whose sunny smile and silent comprehension were often better than speech.

From Carmelo, from all the members of the Mayorga household, from Angelica and Concha Recalde and especially from Doña Encarnacion Figueredo, Hawthorne learnt much Guarani. With Señoritas Leite and Carlota he took systematic lessons and toiled over them several hours each day. He was not altogether a poor scholar, mastered the chief difficulties of the anomalous pronunciation, and acquired a large vocabulary; could make himself understood, he found, in short sentences, at a pinch; came to comprehend readily whatever was said to him, and most of what was said around him; but never attained any conversational ease or fluency, and was dumb before strangers.

His explorations and lessons in the vernacular were prosecuted in spite of many interruptions, amid countless distractions and against the pull of multitudinous temptations.

For he found himself a public character and almost held court at the Mayorga mansion. The story of Francia's demeanour towards him at the *fiesta* at Itapúa had been spread all over Asuncion and had given him universal notoriety as a man with whom it were well to curry favour at any cost. The fame of his incredible success as intercessor for the Chilabers and Don Cristobal de Maria ran like wild-fire from house to house among the gentry and made him renowned, almost illustrious. Every human being had heard of his having pleased the Dictator by his horsemanship, after having been accorded the honour of a review for his personal benefit. A considerable proportion of the inhabitants had seen him ride at Francia's left stirrup; some had seen him pass their abodes riding before the Dictator.

Therefore he was overwhelmed with visits and presents: visits, not only from his fellow-conspirators, the acquaintances he had made at Don Vicente's or Doña Juana's, their relations and friends, but even from persons he had never met before and who were entirely unconnected with any one he knew; presents, most embarrassing presents, from a great proportion of his visitors.

Doña Juana had already supplied him with a man-



servant and mounts, two fine horses from the Itapuá *potrero*, blood-bays of Beltran's own selection, and a cream-coloured mule for the mulatto boy, who was named Tolomeo, adored Hawthorne at first sight, and became his very shadow. Being already even oversupplied, it was easy to decline gifts of horseflesh and proffers of desirable valets.

With other presents it was different; a ring of brilliants he had admired on Don Gumesindo's finger; a gold snuff-box Don Cipriano Doméque had overheard him praise; these Don Vicente warned him he could by no means avoid accepting any more than the imported cordials, rare liquors, old wines, *petacones* of cigars and packages of leaf-tobacco which came to him in unwelcome quantities from the men, or the profusion of fruits, preserved fruits, conserved fruits, sweetmeats, exquisite tambour embroideries, delicate *ñanduty* lace and rich filigree work which poured in upon him from their wives.

He would gladly have returned, if it had been possible, the beautifully chased and carved fowling-piece which Don Cristobal sent him. But this gift touched and pleased him. He should have wanted to express his gratitude in some such way had his and Don Cristobal's places been interchanged: he comprehended the liberated gentleman's feelings. The other gifts merely disgusted him.

Clumsy old Arsenio Dominguez, all importance in his suit of doctor's black, himself brought him a bottle of Guarani eye-lotion; and it was impossible to be displeased either with the gift or the giver, for the lotion was likely to be useful, and Doctor Arsenio was comical.

The Malvinas pointer Don Estanislao Machain presented him with pleased him, of course. The hardest heart could not but melt when a Malvinas pointer wagged his tail in recognition of a new master, laid his head on his knee, and swore fealty dumbly with those expressive eyes. He named the dog Hero, scarcely an original or novel name for a dog, but one that suited Hawthorne. And they became friends and inseparables.

But the donor nauseated him. And even more than the gifts his visitors revolted him. Not one but had, like the fawners crowding round him at Itapuá, some definite specific request to make, some personal profit for him to

further by discreet influence with the Dictator. Their self-seeking was grossly manifest. But grossly manifest only after they had taken their departure and time had elapsed for meditation. At the moment of its presentation the crudest greed was veiled so ingeniously, the baldest rapacity so subtly hinted, the most servile flatteries made so deftly to seem the most natural and spontaneous compliments, that each visitor gave only pleasure while his visit lasted.

When nearly every well-to-do individual in Asuncion had called to pay his respects and had sent one or more gifts, the tide of embarrassments began to ebb and Hawthorne was distinctly relieved.

(3)

Of the sights of the city which he viewed on his rides with Carmelo none interested Hawthorne more than the shipyards, where small sloops, larger schooners and brigantines and brigs of moderate tonnage were constantly under construction. Soloaga's yard had in it nothing remarkable, as there was nothing striking or unusual about its owner and master. It lay on the north-west side of the inlet-lagoon of the *Riachuelo*, directly across *Plaza San Domingo* from the Dominican Convent, along an arm of the lagoon which branched off south-westwards from the inlet, just opposite the kitchen garden of the Palacio. The Jesuits' bridge at the neck of the lagoon had a span sufficient to admit of the launched hull of a respectable brig being towed under it. Soloaga masted and rigged his vessels while at anchor off the *rivera* or harbour-frontage.

The other shipyard on Ship-Builders' Cove near the last bend in Payaguá Brook was as different from Soloaga's as he was from his competitor. Soloaga was small, neat and mild; his yard always clean and in order. The western yard was the home of dirt and confusion and was presided over by that "Don" Francisco (always called "Pancho" or "Curro") Riquelme whom Hawthorne had met as Lopez escorted him to visit the prison, and whom all Asuncion spoke of and half Asuncion addressed as "*El Zapo*" ("The Toad").

His yard lay in an elbow formed by Ship-Builders' Cove

and his two docks, the lower wet, the upper dry, separated by a rude lock. Upon a highish bank on the side opposite the locks his cottage was perched, with a small garden-space about it, shut in with the close trees of a considerable patch of woodland. From the cottage no other building was visible, except, across the cove, one or two huts.

The patch of woodland interested Hawthorne greatly, as it differed from any he saw anywhere about Asuncion, or indeed, throughout his entire stay in Paraguay. When he asked the names of the trees Carmelo replied that they had no name in Spanish, but were called "*Irandig*" in Guaraní. On Hawthorne's objecting that there were plainly two very different kinds of trees interspersed, Carmelo explained that one was called the light *irandig* and the other the dark *irandig*.

The dark *irandigs* were not in the least like hemlocks nor were the light *irandigs* in the least like birches, yet their combined effect was very much like that of a New England forest of hemlocks with birches intermixed, an unusual combination which Hawthorne had known well near his home. The absence of underwood, the clean, straight stems of the dark trees, the feathery leafage of the lighter trees, all contributed to this impression.

As he afterwards noticed, this peculiar growth of trees extended over the entire semi-peninsula bounded by Ship-Builders' Cove, Payaguá Brook, and the river. Hemmed in by these open-trunked trees, El Zapo's cottage squatted in its tiny garden, isolated from all the rest of the city.

In the yard his negro and mulatto slaves, all in rags, all showing the marks of stripes, old and recent, all underfed, laboured incessantly with broad-axes, adzes, saws, augers or hammers. Their master seldom condescended to any manual toil, except when some ticklish and exacting bit of work called for the exercise of superior skill.

Mostly he sat on a big, solid seat, something between an overgrown stool and a stumpy bench, a seat without arms or back, set behind the balusters edging the tiny upper portico, open all along its front, but roofed in, which surmounted his verandah. From this point of vantage he tyrannised over his domain, mostly leaning his triple chin on his great hairy arms, crossed on the rails of the balustrade. So seated he had a habit of sticking out his under

lip till it almost reached the tip of his nose, knitting and relaxing his black, shaggy eyebrows and wagging his large flat ears. Thus silently occupied, he was even more hideous than when his countenance was in repose with his chops bagging pendulously and his lower lip slack and slobbering.

If any of his workmen did anything amiss, he knitted his brows till his face looked like soaked leather dried in the sun, removed the eternal *cigarillo* from his lips, and sent the inarticulate beginnings of a bellow booming across the yard. At the sound of it half the slaves began to bungle at their work, shaking with terror. This prelusive reboation would be followed by a sort of combination of wheezy gasp and moaning snarl during the emission of which the stammering giant gradually found human voice, a voice raucous as a jangled gong and stentorian as a boatswain's. Then the Cove, docks and yards re-echoed with a clangorous mixture of Basque, Spanish and Guarani profanity, which choked into stutterings and trailed off into a sort of gurgling howl.

This exhibition of infuriated brutality recurred many times each day, and he spent nearly all of each day behind the balusters of that balcony where the roof sheltered him from the sun and he could catch every breath of breeze. There he ate all his meals, which were frequent and numerous, for he gorged at intervals from daylight till dark.

On a small table by him were always a bottle of *aguardiente* by a small glass, and a big Spanish goblet by a great flagon of dark Benicarlo wine and a fat jug of the thick white wine of Mendoza. There was always a pitcher on that table to dip into the tall red earthenware water jar that stood by it, but this El Zapo used principally to pour over his head when in danger of apoplexy at the crisis of a fit of rage. The huge goblet he drained frequently, the smaller glass even oftener.

His bill of fare was varied though coarse.

Roast beef, especially *carne con cuero*, he gorged in enormous quantities. But other beef dishes, even *olla*, he regarded as too light and too rapidly digested, as food that did not stay by a man. Lamb or fresh fish he scorned as frothy and frivolous dishes; as too insipid, no matter how much garlic was lavished on their preparation. A staple of his diet was ham, cheap hams, the older the better, no

matter how over-ripe. These his wife boiled for him in sour wine; with them he consumed quantities of *bacalao* or salt cod, generally also chosen for its cheapness, and the ranker the more relished. Red herrings, sardines in vinegar as well as in olive oil, anchovies and shrimps were acceptable relishes to him, as was bacon, which he preferred rancid. Of the jumbled leavings of all these comestibles his wife concocted appalling ragouts of lean beef or stringy mutton, half garlic and acceptable to her lord in proportion to their high flavour and insistent smell. With all these he swallowed innumerable onions, fried or raw, most of the spoiled olives that found their way to Asuncion and mountains of lettuce swimming in Andalusian oil.

There was a bridle-path along the south margin of his docks, and Hawthorne often passed that way with Carmelo and reined up to watch him rolling from side to side, heaving and lurching his great bulk like a caged animal, and to listen to his blaring yawps and clucking croaks.

But at a whiff of his wife's cooking they generally spurred on.

"It's like nothing else on earth, I'll wager," Carmelo regularly remarked.

"It is like something I have smelt before," said Hawthorne on the first occasion. "But I cannot recall when or where. It's so bad I ought to remember."

But when they forded Payaguá brook and came upon the *tolderia* of those "English" Indians, if the wind set from the *toldos* towards them, they vowed El Zapo's kitchen smelled good, and not only spurred but flogged to get away.

"Worst smell on earth!" said Carmelo.

"They smell very like the *toldos* of the Telhueches near Buenos Aires," Hawthorne replied, "and not much worse. I've smelt something like that, I suppose, at every Indian *tolderia* I ever passed. Probably that's why the stench seemed familiar the first time I smelled it."

"Worst smell on earth!" Carmelo repeated.

"To my nose," Hawthorne declared, "the shambles have a far worse odour."

In fact, one visit to the local butchering ground was more than enough for Hawthorne.

It had corrals for cattle all about it on three sides; on

the fourth, warehouses, sheds, barns, *baracas* or *galpones* for storing hides. Blood of slaughtered cattle soaked the earth; skulls, skeletons, carcasses lay about. Ducks, fowls and turkeys were squabbling over scraps; pigs were gorging amid the offal and dogs fighting for bones. River-gulls, crows, carrion-crows, vultures, even king-vultures skimmed, wheeled and hovered over the space, almost darkening the air. Every inch of the ground was festering in the blazing sun; and the effluvia emitted by the tallow-trying shed, the heaps of hides, the sodden earth, the fresh-killed animals and the decayed carcasses were fairly insupportable.

But the shambles, the Payaguá *tolderia*, and the lee-side of El Zapó's kitchen were the only ill-smelling places in all Asuncion, as Hawthorne knew it. In so few neighbourhoods were the buildings at all crowded, so generally were the dwellings separated and scattered, so universal were gardens, hedges and trees, that the city had mostly the clean, healthy air of open country.

## (4)

The people too were clean, notably clean. Except the few beggars.

As in Buenos Aires, Hawthorne found beggary a recognised occupation, almost an honourable profession. Also, as further down the river, a beggar was spoken of as a "*Pordiosero*," a "*Forgodssaker*," from their everlasting reiteration of "*por Dios*" or "*por el amor de Dios*," "for God's sake." On the plea of "for God's sake," they made a good living. But whereas in Buenos Aires the *Pordiosero* went about on horseback, his great toes hooked into the loops of raw hide that served him for stirrup leathers and stirrups, behind him a wallet and hide candle-box; even riding, as a matter of course, into the courtyard of a handsome mansion and waiting to be served; likely enough going home before noon with a supply of alfalfa for his nag, with beef, mutton, bacon, fish, a brace or two of partridges or a small armadillo perhaps; vegetables, fruit and even wine and spare cash for himself: the *Pordioseros* of Asuncion went about on foot. Little cash any one of them ever saw, less did any one of them ever touch,

for gold coin was all but non-existent in Paraguay, silver scarce, and even copper far from plentiful. Food, however, was abundant, and the market women, kind-hearted and easy-going, held to a pious belief that the heavenly powers would return them two-fold or even four-fold what they gave "*por el amor de Dios.*" So the *Pordioseros* made a comfortable livelihood for themselves.

Preëminent among them was Pai Mbatú, once an aspirant to the priesthood and accorded the title of "Padre" or "Pai" as a sort of solace, although he had never attained even to minor orders, being barely more than half-witted. In lax, indulgent Asuncion objection was made by no one, high or low, to his wearing the cast-off shovel-hat and cassock of some charitable clergyman. He almost believed himself a cleric, expecting and exacting the deference due to his habit and title.

His idea of his own importance was increased by the possession of a faithful servant, sole remnant of a gentlemanly inheritance, sole reminder that he had been born a gentleman. This *Tapé* Indian loved him like a dog and followed him about like one.

Each day they went together to market: the master in the lead, the servant following at a respectable distance, a large hide tray, locally called a *tipá*, balanced on his head, a hide candle-box in his right hand, an earthenware jug in his left.

In the market the jug was filled with wine, a little from one vendor, a little more from another; the box grew heavy with candles of beef-tallow, beeswax or *quabirá*-wax; the tray gradually heaped itself with beef, roasting-ears, manioc, onions, garlic, peppers, oranges, pies, tarts, cakes, even flowers that Pai Mbatú fancied; while there was sure to be at least one package of leaf tobacco among the contributions, perhaps even a fresh cigar or two hid under the Padre's cassock.

Hawthorne once followed this local celebrity about the market and overheard some of his colloquies with the women.

"I gave you a pie only two months ago. Ask Fruela; she has given you nothing these four months."

And when her neighbour also objected, Pai Mbatú began to jabber odd tags of half-remembered Latin sufficient

to make poor Fruela suppose he was commencing an incantation. This conjecture he confirmed by waving in circles his cane, before which Fruela shrunk away as if it had been a sorcerer's wand. The cane described narrower and narrower circles, the jabber of the Latin became louder and louder, and while poor Fruela crossed herself and mumbled an *Ave* as an exorcism, the spike on the end of the cane transfixed a tempting tart and instantly Pai Mbatú, like an angler striking a half-hooked fish, gave a dexterous jerk and landed the tart in the *tipá*.

Pai Mbatú was half clean. None of the other *Pordioseros* were clean in any respect; all mere masses of filthy rags over emaciated bodies. Why emaciated Hawthorne could not conjecture, for all seemed well-fed on charity. Yet lean limbs, staring joints and ribby bodies were the mark of the Asuncion *Pordioseros*.

Hawthorne had the curiosity to enquire the location of Pai Mbatú's abode, and to observe it on returning from one of his early morning rides. It was almost at the edge of the city, south of the Franciscan Convent where some fifty or sixty mean little huts, with long intervals between, formed the last fringe of urban habitations.

Of these Pai Mbatú's was the meanest: a mud hut, palm-thatched, nestled among banana and orange trees. Yet even it had two minute huts behind it: one for the *Tapé* Indian, one for the cookery. Under the tiny portico of the hut Hawthorne was astonished to descry Benito and amazed to see that he was manifestly chaffering for eatables.

On returning to the Mayorgas, he told what he had seen and asked questions. The family in chorus or one chiming in after the other, explained that, of course, Pai Mbatú and his *Tapé* had to have clothing and spare cash as well as food, so he begged each day more than he needed and sold the surplus; that Benito was canny and bought his master's food and other supplies wherever they cost least, getting much at half price from Mbatú, whom they had cost nothing.

After the explanations had lost their interest and the rest of the family had formed groups, conversing absorbedly on other topics, Carlota, who sat next Hawthorne, demurely busy over her embroidery hoop, replying to his



remark that Mbatú was assuredly the most extraordinary beggar anywhere on earth, put the query:

"Did you notice the next hovel but one east of Pai Mbatú's?"

"I don't recall it," Hawthorne answered

"It is fresh lime-washed," Carlota prompted; "bright pink all over except the corners, and they are bright blue."

"Yes," Hawthorne admitted, "I couldn't help noticing it. But there was no one under the corridor and the windows were shuttered fast."

"With bright blue shutters," Carlota amplified. "They are always closed all day, but sometimes open at night. And sometimes you can see Cosme under the portico even in the daytime. He is a mulatto, with two good eyes, and serves the most extraordinary *Pordiosero* in Asuncion or elsewhere, a beggar once a man of good family, they say. He is called Pai Gaspar, and never goes abroad by day. Cosme does all his begging for him, and folks are generous to him. They say Pai Gaspar took a vow to let no human being see his face by daylight. But at night he can be dimly seen under his verandah. The other *Pordioseros* say that he wanders about the wharves on starlit nights, but never by moonlight. Benito buys of Cosme as well as of Pai Mbatú's *Tapé*."

"And the charitable give lavishly to a beggar they never see?" Hawthorne exclaimed.

"Of course," Carlota concluded; "to refuse the needy would be bad luck."

(5)

At least once a week Hawthorne was invited to accompany the Dictator on his afternoon ride. Generally they went out to the barracks and reviewed the troops. But once Francia, without warning or explanation, led his guest on a long and apparently aimless ramble through endless alternations of high-roads and cross-lanes, far out into the country southward, in a circuit about Lambaré. And once, with the politest preliminary announcement of his intention and queries as to Hawthorne's inclination, they visited together the tiny cottage at Ibirai. There he displayed the interior of his former abode, a filthy little kitchen, a

bedroom bleak and comfortless as a Jesuit's, and the study, the largest room in the house, but, even so, cramped, mean and dark. It was thick with dust, the dust of years, but otherwise might have been vacated the day before. Guttered candles were yet in the cheap earthenware candlesticks, the table was encumbered with a deep litter of papers, the brick of the floor mostly hidden under just such rubbish as defiled the study in the Palacio. The bookshelves were mostly bare, but one, about shoulder-high, held some three or four dozen books of varying sizes.

"Not worth moving to the city," Francia explained.

Hawthorne wanted to ask under which window had occurred the tragedy of the mother and child. But, eyeing the log on which Rivarola had sat to be shot, he somehow hesitated to speak.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A FLASH OF LIGHTNING

#### (1)

**N**EARLY every morning, going early to escape the heat, Hawthorne paid a visit to the public prison for the sake of getting a glimpse of Cecilia. Scarcely more than a glimpse did he get, for she maintained her distant reserve and gave him no encouragement to linger.

Within four days after the first alleviation of her condition he found her busily seeding cotton. In those days all cotton spun and woven in South America was laboriously seeded by hand, as when first introduced; for the cotton-gin had not yet reached any part of the continent, least of all Paraguay.

The next day Cecilia was carding cotton, while her old negress was clumsily seeding. A few days later both negresses were seeding, and the two mulattoes carding, while Cecilia was spinning. Not many days passed before he found the Guarani woman with the baby also spinning, yet not, like Cecilia, with a wheel, but with distaff in one hand and spindle in the other. The two mulattoes were at work

at a primitive hand-loom, set up near the far corner of the court under a lean-to shed open on three sides. The two negresses were carding diligently, and several of the hussies in the cell-room were intermittently seeding.

In this progress of industry Gomez took great pride, telling at length every detail of the procuring of the cotton and the spinning-wheel, and of the putting together of the loom. In contrast with his positive pleasure in the improvement of the condition of his charges, Cecilia continued her chilly and forbidding demeanour. She gravely thanked Hawthorne for the cotton, for the spinning-wheel, for the loom; but always with the ironical reservation that she was told that he ought to be thanked but could not really credit the statement. She spoke with similar reserve of her gratitude for the visits of the various ladies Hawthorne brought with him. Only once did she manifest so much as a tendency towards being mollified. That was when Doña Juana accompanied Hawthorne.

The old lady swept into the women's *patio* as if she owned it, shooed the other women away as if they had been hens intruding in her flower-garden, and sat down on the hide-cot by Cecilia, patting her hand as though she had found a long-lost granddaughter.

"My dear," she said, "I should have been to see you long ago, and I'm going to say a thousand *aves* at the altar of Santa Agueda in the Church of the Incarnation and go round the cross in the Capilla at Itapuá four times on my bare knees, saying a *credo* at each corner, as a penance for my lack of Christian charity.

"But I always did hate all the Rodriguez clan and I did not reflect that you were only accidentally connected with the pestilential tribe and essentially and forever a woman and a sister to me and all of us. Or a daughter to an old hag like me.

"Forgive me. I've come at last, and I'll do all I can for you. You're to leave spinning to your inferiors. I'll see you have needles and silks and hoops and all the rest. You'll do embroidery and tambouring and drawn-work, as a lady should, and leave coarser arts for mere women."

In fact, the very next day, Hawthorne found the young negress at the loom, and deft enough at it, the Guarani and the mulattoes diligently spinning; and the old negress idle,

while the minxes seeded and carded and seemed to produce enough cotton to keep the spinners busy.

After she had an embroidery frame in her hands, Cecilia seemed to soften, to become less unapproachable. Her thanks to Hawthorne for bringing Doña Juana to visit her sounded less perfunctory and more genuine. He ventured to bring her fruit or flowers nearly every day, and sometimes both the same day, and she accepted these gifts with less frigidity and more graciousness. However, Hawthorne suspected that they were distributed among her fellow-prisoners, not kept for herself.

(2)

After the siesta hour, Hawthorne by preference resorted to Dr. Bargas' wine-shop. There he found always one or two of his fellow-conspirators, became better acquainted with men he had already met, and continually formed new acquaintanceships.

The startling incongruities of conditions at Asuncion incessantly astonished him. Don Lisardo's licentiate's waistcoat and breeches, monk's habit, priest's hat and Gaucho sabre gave a sort of sample of material and social discordances: the magnificent solid silver table-services in dining-rooms with sashless windows and mud-floors; the gorgeous and gaudy formal attire of gentlemen who half undressed for meals and ate served by naked slave-boys and slave-girls; the exquisite courtesy, delicate wit, refined humour and readiness at rhymed impromptus in gatherings where mothers narrated minutely the symptoms of illnesses or adolescence exhibited by their pretty daughters there present, where both sexes talked of the bald realities of existence without any cloak of phrase; all these were perfectly in line with the contrast perpetually exhibited by gentlemen of the most aristocratic appearance and patrician manners displaying incredible ignorance and simplicity.

This was manifested by what passed one afternoon at the wine-shop and by the resultant rumour among the old Spaniards of the city.

In a lull between Dr. Bargas' torrential praises of Mendoza, abuses of the shortcomings of Asuncion and its inhab-

itants, laudations of the Marquess de Torretagle de Lima, and dithyrambics on the charms of his own perfect spouse and cherubic youngsters, Hawthorne and Don Hilarion Decoud were talking of the extent of England's commerce and the volume of her trade. Several idlers were listening, among them Don Fulgencio Yegros, all gigantic in his general's gold-laced blue coat, looking on with goggling eyes while the others talked. Only once did he break into speech.

Don Hilarion had been putting questions as to the shipping in the port of London, and Hawthorne had been trying to give him some idea of the number of vessels and variety of merchandise. As an instance, he cited one of the supply-convoys the government had despatched to the Baltic in aid of Russia during the wars with Napoleon, giving the names of the convoying frigates and line-of-battle ships and of the merchantmen, with their tonnage, as he had heard them stated at Buenos Aires, and going into particulars of their cargoes and the promptness and rapidity of the lading. He wound up with a description of the appearance of London Pool, of the forest of masts, of the congestion of shipping yet despatch of traffic.

The big Gaucho rolled himself and rumbled, as it were, internally.

When he spoke, he said, apparently after deep reflection:

"How fine for us if a good strong south wind should spring up and blow day and night until all those boats were blown right up-river to Asuncion, and kept there till they had to sell out all their rich freight!"

Hawthorne was amazed at the simplicity that recked of no water but the Rio Paraná, and fancied London, like Buenos Aires, as merely a town somewhere down the river.

Don Bernardo, who was present, remarked to Hawthorne at the first opportunity:

"The Creoles call us Spaniards Goths and affect to despise us. The real basis of their hatred is an uneasy misgiving that after all there may be some value in our wider knowledge of the world, in what they assume are the mere outworn fripperies and effete absurdities of an obsolete age. These natives might be the better off for some of our cosmopolitan experience."

About local matters they were all well-informed, and gave Hawthorne endless details concerning Paraguayan genealogies, relationships and personal characteristics. The Dictator's kinsfolk and connections were a favourite subject for conversation, and Hawthorne learned all about the Caballero nose and profile, and its variations as it appeared among the Caballeros themselves, the Francias in particular, and the Rodriguezes in general, and all but vanished among the Marecoses, Galvans and Mirandas. The story of Don Domingo Rodriguez was told and retold, and Don Domingo described until Hawthorne, acutely alive to every mention of Cecilia's husband, felt intimately acquainted with every feature of his appearance.

At the wine-shop also he learned all that was generally known about the various prisoners in the dungeons and public *cuartel*. There had been two Abendanos, it appeared: Felicien and Galicien. Galicien had been in the service of Don Felix de Azara and had accompanied him to Europe when he returned there in 1801.

In Paris he had somehow become acquainted with some of the remnants of the Terrorists and Jacobins and of that class of regicide survivors which furnished the adherents and followers of Moreau, Pichegru and Cadoudal. From them he imbibed the antiquated notions and obsolete catchwords of the early revolutionary period, and returned to Paraguay full of sansculottism and similar rococo ideas. With these as a stock-in-trade, he had set up as a sort of apostle or missionary to the Guaranies and had rapidly acquired a large following and a wide vogue. He had assumed the title of Galicien le Fort, Marquess of the Guaranies, and had been looked up to among his race as a kind of messenger from Heaven. His brother Felicien had become his first and chief disciple. They and their adherents had spread among the more discontented of the Guaranies ideas of liberty, equality and emancipation and had fostered unrest.

Don Bernardo, who narrated most of this to Hawthorne, had merely laughed at their antics. But Francia during his first brief period of power, while he was for a time the controlling spirit of the original *junta*, had repressed their activities and both had gone into hiding. Later, when he assumed the direction of affairs on account of the panic

arising from Don Nicolas Herrera's mission to Asuncion, Francia had hunted both down relentlessly.

## (3)

Don Bernardo's remarks on Creole narrow-mindedness and lack of information were confirmed to Hawthorne a few days later. He was passing the house of Don Bermudo Larreta, that very bald man. The worthy Don, after the fashion of his kind, was comfortably seated in an armchair under his portico, a cigar in one hand, a *maté* cup in the other, the neck of his shirt open, his sleeves rolled up, his embroidered waistcoat and ample coat of orange-tawny velvet hanging by his rapier and sword-belt from pegs on the wall behind him. Padre Procopio Baca was seated beside him, and the two were in a close confabulation. Don Bermudo greeted Hawthorne and invited him to join them, beckoning him with gestures of mysterious purport but manifest insistency.

When Hawthorne had taken a chair, he whispered, with a great air of secrecy:

"Was it you, Señor Don Guillermo, who circulated the marvellous news? Or, if not, who first heard it? We should like to know; and in any case we desire your confirmation of the report."

"What news do you refer to?" Hawthorne queried.

"Have you not heard?" Don Bermudo exclaimed. "This is indeed a pleasure to me, to be the first to communicate to you news of our approaching salvation, of the certain downfall of the despot."

"You speak recklessly, Señor Don Bermudo," Hawthorne said. "Be cautious."

"The need of caution," said the bald man, "will soon be past. Soon we shall all be free."

"I have no idea what you are talking about," Hawthorne declared.

Don Bermudo mopped his bald head and was plainly choosing his words.

"Let me speak, Pelado," said Padre Procopio. "I can be more succinct." And he continued:

"It is universally reported about Asuncion that the great

Emperor Alessandro, Tsar of all the Russias, not content with having overthrown the Corsican ogre, not satisfied with having twice entered and occupied Paris, aims at acquiring still greater glory, purposes to make his name trebly illustrious by the achieving of a mightier exploit. Touched to the heart by what he hears of our miseries and of the impieties of the monster, he designs our rescue and the extinction of the tyrant. A great flotilla, carrying a mighty army, provided with all sorts of artillery, ordnance, musketry and munitions of war, convoyed by the most powerful battle-ships, is already on its way to Asuncion. There is a rumour that it has even passed the Bajada, acclaimed by the prayers and blessings of all Europeans and Porteños. This is the great news!"

It required but a few questions on Hawthorne's part to satisfy him that his illustrative citation of British aid to Russia had been distorted into this amazing myth by some auditor as ignorant as Don Fulgencio. But nothing he could say would convince Don Bermudo or Pai Procopio of the absurdity and baselessness of the rumour.

While he was arguing with them, Rafael Mayorga appeared on foot and evidently in a great flurry, a most unusual condition for any South American and still more for a full-blooded Spaniard. At sight of his face, and of its change of expression from troubled anxiety to hopeful relief, Hawthorne did not need any words to prompt him to excuse himself and hurry off with Rafael.

"What is amiss?" he enquired, as they went.

"I do not know," Rafael replied, "but Desiderio and Carmelo are scouring the city looking for you, and I set out at once in this direction. Desiderio is so upset that I conjecture father has been arrested."

The conjecture proved false, for they found Don Vicente in his *patio* with Prior Hermengildo Cañete. The picture they made was so like that formed by the pair Hawthorne had just left that, if they had been oil paintings, instead of living pictures, one might have described them as two renditions of the same subject by different painters.

"And what brings you back so soon, Don Guillermo?" Mayorga enquired.

When Rafael had explained, his father was much puz-



zled, as he knew of no cause for perturbation nor any reason for summoning Hawthorne. As they were making and abandoning conjectures, Desiderio burst in on them, evidently in a state of high-strung emotion.

"*Dios!*" his father exclaimed. "Who has been arrested now? You look nearly as much wrought up as when you confirmed our concern for poor Alberto."

"Nobody has been arrested, that I know of," said Desiderio. "But there is something the matter with one of Angelica's eyes."

Don Vicente did not laugh; the instinct of politeness, even between father and son, was too strong in South America for any such crude brutality. He did smile, however, and remarked:

"Doubtless one of Angelica's eyes is as important as the life of our best friend."

"I have been searching for Don Guillermo," Desiderio said, "to ask him to go with me."

"Where?" his father queried.

"To the wine-shop of Dr. Bargas, I suppose," Desiderio answered.

"Why, in the name of Heaven?" Don Vicente demanded, bewildered.

Desiderio looked sheepish.

"Don Antonio has called in all the doctors: Dominguez, Baiguer, Sabola, Narvaez. No one can conjecture what is wrong. The eye waters profusely, but there is no sign of inflammation; it is hardly even red. Yet it hurts horribly; Angelica has not slept these two nights. Something must be done to help her. Don Antonio has been so public in his advocacy of native talent and his hostility to Don Tomas that he fears he would refuse to have anything to do with any of his family. He knows you are his friend and I yours. He has besought me to ask you to intercede with Don Tomas for him."

"And Doña Tules has begged you also," Don Vicente remarked, "and you needed no urging."

"Nor do I need any urging," Hawthorne said.

In a few moments he was off with Desiderio to the wine-shop.

There Parlett was found not hopelessly drunk.

"Damned old fool," he said; "serve him right if I told

him to go to the devil! But Angelica's too pretty to lose an eye. *Vamos!*"

At the Recalde mansion they found her father, all profuse, apologetic protestations of esteem; with him Prior Santiago Reloyos, darkly suspicious of a foreigner and a heretic, still more of an outlander who set up to be a surgeon, yet marred his doctorial suit of black with a scarlet cravat and thought so little of his professional dignity that he smiled, bustled merrily about showering off-hand greetings, rattled away genially, never listened to anything said to him, and behaved generally like a jovial busybody, rather than as a staid, grave *medico* should.

With the gentlemen was also Doña Tules, all solicitude for her first-born.

Angelica came into the *sala*, a tall, graceful sweep of clinging garments, her small face half-buried in a handkerchief, the other half resolute to smile and be brave.

Parlett would have her out in the *patio*, where the light was better. All the rest followed.

The little surgeon stood before the chair she took at his bidding, tilted back her head, opened and inspected both eyes, laid his instrument-case wide on a chair-seat, took out a magnifying glass, examined the right eye, his stubble of unshaven chin rasping Angelica's cheek, straightened up and cried:

"Ha, ha! We shall have you comfortable and easy in a jiffy, miss! And what were you doing when this pain began?"

"It began quite suddenly," Angelica replied, "while I was sorting a roll of leaf-tobacco, picking out the pale leaves mother likes best."

"And you disturbed a *piqué*, a *chigoe*, a jigger," Parlett chattered, "lurking in the tobacco, as jiggers do."

"But this jigger is a genius among insects, or a fool, which is more likely, or an Irish jigger. Instead of hunting for toes to burrow in, as jiggers should, he must sample an eye, for a change, and he jumps at yours, or, as I say, maybe he's a Hibernian jigger by ancestry, and jumps without looking, for jumping's sake."

"Anyhow, he jumped at your eye and has his claws buried in the pupil, and no wonder you suffer with all those little hooks stabbing into one of the tenderest parts

of you. Likely he's as uncomfortable in his way, and very much astonished at having hold of slippery horn with no blood in it, instead of soft, juicy flesh, as he's used to, and his forefathers even to the ninth and tenth generation.

"Cheer up! We'll soon have him out of that, as Cortez remarked when he saw Montezuma on his palace roof."

He then gave orders to Desiderio to hold open Angelica's eyelids. When her parents protested, horrified that a young gallant should lay hands on an unmarried girl, he brushed aside their objections by a curt:

"I'll choose my own assistants, thank you, or give up the job right here."

He then so manipulated his pocket-microscope and cajoled and browbeat Don Antonio and Doña Tules that both succeeded in seeing the jigger plainly, even to his spread and clutching claws, and Padre Santiago must needs look also and be convinced.

"You ought to be named Tomas and not I," Parlett growled. "You're the doubter."

When Padre Reloyos had looked his fill, Parlett concluded:

"We've kept the young lady in pain long enough. Stand aside, everybody!"

He rummaged in his instrument-case and produced a little vial of red precipitate.

"Got a small feather handy," he enquired, "some of those longish, thinnish feathers, as the gamecock said when he gaffed the barnyard rooster?"

He selected a suitable feather from those brought him, dipped it in the red precipitate, directed Desiderio to hold Angelica's eyelids apart, stroked the eye-ball with the feather, called for some of the best olive oil, waited a while, anointed the eye with the oil to remove the precipitate, and when Angelica declared that the pain had vanished triumphantly bade Desiderio hold the eye open again, and so dominated the gathering that not only her father and mother peered through the microscope into Angelica's eye and saw for themselves that the jigger was gone, but Prior Santiago did the like.

He was dumbfounded.

"This countryman of yours," he said to Hawthorne, "is either a devil or an angel. There is nothing he does not know."

## (4)

Later in the day, at Dr. Bargas' wine-shop, the little surgeon, very muzzy, was bragging of Don Antonio's generous fee.

"Look at that!" Parlett cried. "Six doubloons, solid gold, good as guineas; worth three guineas and a half each of the six. Twenty pounds' worth of gold; one hundred pesos, one hundred *piastres*, one hundred dollars! All for chasing a poor little jigger out of a girl's eye.

"And what does old Sour-Face pay me for curing his horse-grenadiers? his *cuarteleros*? his darling hussars?

"Two *rials* a visit, and that's a shilling.

"Here I've the price of four hundred visits to the barracks, all for tickling a pretty lass's eye with a chicken feather."

## (5)

Hawthorne's restless curiosity prompted him to pay at least one visit to the right bank of the Rio Paraguay and make some sort of acquaintance with the edge of the Gran Chaco. Don Vicente was horrified at the suggestion.

"The Payaguás," he said, "are fairly sensible for savages, and exhibit as much forethought as could be expected of wild men. They are wary and never cross the river when they suspect danger. Yet scarcely a month passes without a report of several of them being ambushed and killed by the Indians of the Chaco.

"The Guaycarús are all fierce and sanguinary nomads, but the Abipones, the tribes frequenting the portion of the Chaco opposite us, are the most ferocious and bloodthirsty of all of them. Be warned and give up this erratic notion."

Carmelo was less discouraging.

"The Payaguás are reckless to a degree, sometimes, like all savages," he said; "but they are cautious enough when convoying Europeans, and they are perfect scouts. I'll go with you.

"But we need not let father know, nor any one else. We'll take no servants, just go you and I together. We'll make a day of it. It'll be rather a lark.

"The Payaguás have no canoes big enough to ferry over two horses at once. We don't want to make two trips, the first of us waiting for the second. It would take more time and would be a risk, if there should chance to be any Abipones anywhere about. So we'll need two of the biggest Payaguá canoes, one for you and the other for me. The horses can be blindfolded and by sitting with a hand on their bridles we can keep them steady. The Payaguás will hold their tongues forever for a little extra pay. Extra and all, they won't charge much anyhow."

It required but a few days for Carmelo to make his arrangements. Starting soon after sunrise of a perfect Paraguayan morning, they cantered off southward past the Franciscan Monastery, as if on one of their usual rides. Doubling back after a short half mile, they swung round an abrupt curve, through the complication of cactus-hedged, orange-shaded lanes, passed to the east of the church of San Roque, and came to the water's edge at the appointed spot, the foot of the first gully eastward from the church of San Blas.

There they found the two canoes, each with eight stalwart savages, every man with a nine-foot paddle. Hawthorne was much edified at the neat and simple devices by which the horses were induced to enter the canoes. In a very short time he was at his horse's head, in the place he was to keep, almost at once they were skimming the surface of the river, the prows of the canoes pointed well upstream. Before they seemed fairly under way, they shot in among the rushes and underwood of the further bank. On the Chaco shore the Rio Paraguay was fringed by a dense belt of riverside forest, many of the trees acacias and much of the underbrush equally thorny. Through this they had some ado to make their way, even with the cunning guidance of a Payaguá completely an adept at following the paths made by the wild cattle in coming to drink.

After they passed this belt of waterside vegetation, they came out on the rolling hills of the true Chaco.

There they spent some hours galloping about, their Pay-

aguá guides running tirelessly by the horses. They saw little except the recurrent sameness of low rolling hills, clumps of *algarroba* trees along their drier summits, brakes of impenetrable cane in the wetter hollows, and everywhere, as Don Vicente had said, groves of palm-trees, palm-trees standing wide apart, their trunks very thick and rapidly tapering, their plummy tops absurdly inadequate-looking for their sturdy stems; and besides palm-trees, square leagues of coarse *chala* grass among or beyond them waving in the wind.

Living things were few. They saw several varieties of snipe and plover in the openings, parrots and toucans in the trees, and encountered three armadillos, one of which Carmelo shot. Once Hawthorne thought he caught a glimpse of a jaguar. But Carmelo doubted and the Payaguás were incredulous.

The day was extraordinarily fair, not oppressively hot, and they found the weather agreeable. Until they had returned to the landward edge of the belt of riverside forest, they scarcely noticed a cloud in the sky.

When they came out at the waterside and found the waiting canoes, not only Hawthorne, but Carmelo also, was amazed at the alteration in the sky.

"This is something quite unusual," Carmelo exclaimed. "We are going to have a violent storm. Generally they only follow very hot and very still days. I never saw such a threatening sky develop so rapidly after a cool, breezy day."

The Payaguás were manifestly not a little disturbed.

The first blast of the storm overtook them when they were about midway of the river. It did not come upon them with a continuous hurricane of wind, a solid wall of rain, drowning the air, and an all-engulfing darkness blotting out the view in all directions, like a Buenos Aires *pampero*; small puffs roughened the surface of the river, leaving unruffled spaces between, spurts of rain pelted down and ceased as suddenly as they began; the gusts grew successively more violent and longer, the rain more furious, the intervals between the gusts shorter. Then each squall buried them in a whirling grey blend of air, rain and spray. At the edge of each Hawthorne could see far across relatively quiet water through clear air to the next; in the

midst of each he could scarcely make out the Payaguás, paddling like maniacs, not two yards from him.

As the storm worsened he totally lost sight of Carmelo's canoe, and had no idea of the position of his own. He had a vague notion that they had been swept past the city, but when they suddenly came to shore he had no guess of the locality. They touched the bank in the nick of time between two squalls, Hawthorne and his horse landed as easily as if the weather had been fair and the air calm; the next instant the canoe and Payaguás were swept out of view into the turmoil of an appalling gust. Pelted and flailed by the rain, Hawthorne headed blindly for the shelter of the trees at the top of the bank, and reached them just as the gust passed. Before the next broke over him he had leisure to look about him and perceive he was in the grove round El Zapo's homestead. Leading his horse, he attempted to find the cottage.

When in the midst of the wood a gust of such fury broke over them that the darkness was almost complete and was made to seem more dense by the flashes of lightning. They and the thunder so terrified the horse that he reared, tried to break away and could not be led. Hawthorne tethered him to a tree trunk and groped his way forward toward where he conjectured the garden-clearing lay.

Before he had reached it, the squall had passed, and as he cleared the trees, another was just impending, a sullen canopy of whirling slate-coloured clouds, covering all the firmament except a clear patch of sky low down to the south-east.

Against that strip of intense green light he glimpsed a tall figure running towards the cottage from the other corner of the garden-patch. So entirely did all the light come from that long narrowing ribbon of clear sky that he saw the man's face as if silhouetted against it, a sharp individual profile, seen only for an instant and then disappearing behind a hedge as the man ran on.

Before Hawthorne reached the cottage, the storm burst in its full fury. The last dozen yards he struggled as if against a flood. He was all but beaten to the earth and the darkness was intense.

Groping, he found the back of the cottage.

At that moment came a flash of lightning.

He saw a tall man not a yard from him; saw the face plain.

When he had felt his way round the cottage and reached the portico, he staggered under it, half drowned and gasping for breath.

El Zapo, phlegmatic and raucous, made him welcome.

Speech, much less conversation, was impossible in that continuous roar of rain, mostly itself inaudible because of the almost incessant rumble of thunder, which at short intervals was overridden by rending explosions that shook the earth.

It was a full hour before the turmoil of the storm had slackened enough to permit of anything but mere existence. Then they had *maté* and lit cigars. But the steady down-pour of rain filled up the windless air and made any thought of departure impossible.

El Zapo had several children, all boys. The youngest, a merry, precocious urchin about eight years old, the fattest boy in Asuncion, Hawthorne had noticed on his rides with Carmelo. During the crashes of thunder he had been hidden somewhere in the cottage; when they abated he appeared, at first hanging back bashfully, then revolving about the stranger, irresistibly drawn to him by curiosity.

Hawthorne had just the right way with children, and soon had him at his knee and talking.

His talk was all about marketing, eatables and cooking. For one so young, his knowledge of the relative desirability and cost of provisions was amazing. His ambition was to grow up to be a cook, the cook of a rich man who would not have to consider prices at all, but could purchase unlimited supplies of stand-bys and sweep the market clean of all delicacies and rareties.

"The best of everything! The best of everything!" he kept repeating, apparently in his mother's voice.

As during the long hour, when not one of those about him stirred any more than he; as on his ride homeward, throughout which he abstractedly watched the innumerable frogs, large green frogs and small brown frogs, jumping from under his horse's feet out of endless mud-puddles; as during his distracted efforts to be courteous and natural at supper; so after he lay on his bed, Hawthorne ceaselessly pondered and brooded over the shape and profile he had



seen against the sky, and the face revealed by the lightning flash.

The outline and gait irresistibly recalled those of the figure he had watched fleeing in the moonlight round the corner of the Government House.

The profile had exhibited the unmistakable nose of the Caballero lineage.

The face as he had seen it close to his, tallied accurately with the descriptions detailed to him by Don Bernardo Velasco, by Don Vicente, by a dozen frequenters of Dr. Bargas' wine-shop, of the physiognomy of Don Domingo Rodriguez.

## CHAPTER XXV

### FLEAS AND ECLIPSES

#### (1)

THE Mayorga household never noticed Hawthorne's agitation, as all their attention was concentrated upon Carmelo. His canoe had been swept not only past Payaguá brook and Arroyo Jaeh, but almost to the mouth of Arroyo Salamanca; he had landed in the worst of the storm, had found very insufficient shelter in a clump of algarroba trees, and had almost collapsed from the chill and shock.

Hawthorne was concerned for Carmelo, but really glad of the diversion. He was by heredity and training incapable of betraying the vilest criminal, no matter how certain his guilt. Contempt for informers was as much a part of his nature since his early school days as compassion for the unfortunate and aversion to arbitrary authority were innate with him amid the traditions that had nurtured him. Even had he been sure of Francia's kingly rights and his cousin's felony, he would have shrunk from putting the most despicable traitor in the hands of the most upright government.

But while the idea never tempted him for an instant, he was tortured by it incessantly.

A word to the Dictator, and Don Domingo would be shot at dawn. No one would ever guess how the reticent doctor

had discovered his victim's hiding-place. Cecilia would be a widow. Self-interest pointed the plain course. Francia's talk of the safety of Paraguay, of the happiness of the Guaranies, of the risk his people ran with every danger that threatened their Dictator, the horrors of war in Granada and the Banda Oriental ran in his head and whispered that the obvious line of conduct was also for the cause of humanity at large.

Naturally representing whatever he craved as vile and whatever cost the most pain as the honourable path, his New England conscience triumphed, and he woke in a fine glow of self-effacement and altruistic resolve.

He was early in the saddle and cantered off alone; a most natural procedure, as the morning was lovely, he in fine health and spirits, and Carmelo still abed. He rode off with a studious appearance of haphazard rambling and, after some wide circuits, dismounted by El Zapo's docks. He tethered his horse, picked his way across the timbers of the lock and found himself face to face with El Zapo himself.

"Señor Don Francisco," Hawthorne began, with laborious courtesy, "I wish to speak a word with you."

"Sp-sp-speak it," the corpulent giant enunciated, a sort of howl between the preliminary stutter and terminal bel-low.

"We should talk, if it please you, Señor Don Francisco," Hawthorne pursued, "where we cannot be overheard."

"N-n-no one can hear you," El Zapo gurgled and bawled. "I can't half hear you myself. I don't care who hears me."

Hawthorne glanced about, saw no one close by, for the nearest shipwright was about forty yards away, and spoke, sinking his voice:

"You have a guest, Señor Don Francisco."

"S-s-since you scrambled across that lock, I have, yes!" El Zapo roared.

"I mean," Hawthorne said, "you had a guest yesterday afternoon."

"T-t-to be sure I had," El Zapo rumbled. "You were here two hours."

"I mean," Hawthorne insisted, "you had another guest besides me."

El Zapo's goggling eyes were fixed on Hawthorne's.

"I k-k-kept scratching the devil of a flea," he ruminated, "a very Satan, as uncatchable as Beelzebub. But you'd hardly come back here to tell me that."

"You know precisely whom I mean," Hawthorne said, nettled. "He was in the grove when the storm came up, ran out at the west corner of the garden just when I came out at the east corner. I saw him plain against the sky. He did not then see me, and we came face to face at the back of your house. I saw him as plainly as I see you now."

"B-b-being a stranger in Asuncion," he sputtered, "you aren't used to our thunder-storms. They often scare foreigners that way, and sometimes natives, and make them see things."

"There was a flash of lightning just as we almost ran into each other," Hawthorne spoke measuredly. "I saw his nose and the scar on his forehead. I recognised him."

"M-m-my boy!" El Zapo grunted, "I know just what is the matter with you: you got soaked in the downpour and caught a chill. Then you drank too much, trying to get rid of the ague. Never drink too much, young man! Take a pattern from me, and be moderate. I'm always cold sober in the morning."

"I recognised him, I tell you!" Hawthorne persisted. "It was Don Domingo Rodriguez!"

"D-d-did you g-g-go t-t-tell that to Fr-Fr-Francia?" El Zapo stuttered.

"I have told no one!" Hawthorne retorted. "I shall tell no one! I am trying to warn you. If I saw him, some one else might see him, any one else might see him. He is not safe where he is here!"

"Wh-wh-wh-what your game is, I can't understand," El Zapo gurgled. "But you seem to mean well. Now, my advice to you is to ride home and get sober. When you are sober, you're no fool, and you'll realise I'm no fool. You'll realise that if you had seen the man you think you saw he'd have told me the first chance and he'd have spent every minute of his time from then to now getting as far from here as he could. You'll also realise that I appreciate your good intentions. But you'll realise most of all that you didn't need to come here to-day; first, because I'm no fool; second, because a man in hiding is not slow to take alarm,

and third, because I never had any guest, as you call it, except you and that devilish fl-fl-flea!"

From the shipyard Hawthorne went at once to the prison, but he rode at a foot pace, checking his horse whenever it went faster, for he had need to think. As it was, he had too little time, and stood at the door of Cecilia's hut as completely muddled in mind as during his vigils of the night before.

His demeanour visibly startled Cecilia, who gazed at him a long moment with almost an expression of interest, the first approximation to personal regard he had ever seen on her face. It was transient, and her greeting as cold and formal as usual.

Hawthorne made an intelligible but awkward gesture towards the old negress.

"I must speak to you alone," he said. "Send her away."

Many a time previously he had said almost the same words, and always Cecilia had ignored them impassively. Now the "must" instead of "wish to" struck tellingly on her ears and still more was his tone significant. In spite of herself, she complied. The negress heaved herself to her feet and waddled across the yard to the loom-shed.

"I have news that may startle you," Hawthorne began.

"To be startled," spoke Cecilia, "would be a welcome diversion in this monotony. But I doubt if any news you could announce would startle me. Try!"

"I have seen your husband!" Hawthorne blurted out.

A throng of jostling emotions sent a blend of conflicting expressions across Cecilia's face. But she did not look startled, nor at all as Hawthorne conjectured she might; nor was her aspect in the least like any one of the dozen possibilities his prevision had imagined.

"Indeed," she said, "you are then like the Basques or the Scotch, and gifted with preternatural vision! Highlanders of many countries can see what is not before their eyes, or think they can, so that they sometimes cheat themselves into believing that they see what does not exist anywhere on earth. Sometimes they can beguile others with their visions. Perhaps you are as they. Maybe I am also. Let me try! I can see the saintly aureole about your head and the silver plumage of your wings, as about a pictured angel of God!"

Ignoring her sneering banter, Hawthorne spoke resolutely and patiently.

"I am perfectly serious. I am not speaking of visions. As I see you now I saw Don Domingo Rodriguez."

"Where?" Cecilia queried.

Hawthorne glanced behind him.

"That is right!" she whispered incisively. "Don't say. It might be overheard."

Her voice was music to Hawthorne. For the first time she was treating him as a friend, a confederate! By implication she commended his revelation as she had commended his not replying. For the first time she behaved as if they had common interests.

Then he was yet more thrilled. Cecilia spoke in French, French with a very un-French accent, halting French; but the change of language still more implied mutual trust.

"It must have been near Asuncion."

"Very near by," Hawthorne answered in French rather better than Cecilia's.

"I had hoped," she mused aloud, "that they were long ago far away. Where did you see him?"

Her manner was that of a kind-hearted lady enquiring about an unfortunate in whom she had no interest whatever. Her unemotional placidity amazed Hawthorne.

"I saw him," he answered, "near El Zapo's cottage."

"El Zapo," she ruminated. "Yes, I have heard of him. I think I understand. They told me about him. But it seems very unfortunate for them, or very foolish of them."

"Them!" Hawthorne exclaimed. "They! Who are 'they'?"

Instantly Cecilia was completely on her guard. The subtle atmosphere of fellowship which had momentarily enveloped them dissolved instantaneously. Cecilia ignored the question, and spoke formally, in Spanish:

"I must thank you very much for your kind intentions."

Nor did she relax at all during the remainder of their interview.

But next morning, when Hawthorne returned to the prison, she did not, as always before, thank him perfunctorily for the flowers he brought, but beamed at him with a smile full of graciousness, put one in her hair, another in

the lace at the breast of her *tupoi* and thrust the rest into her belt.

## (2)

From the first moment he set eyes on her, Hawthorne had seen Doña Juana have her way in all things except one only. She laid claim to Hawthorne as an adopted grandson or godson, or both, and did her best to have him take up his abode at Itapuá with her and Beltran. In this she failed. Mayorga did not seem a forceful person, but he blandly maintained his rights as the man to whom almost all Hawthorne's letters of introduction were addressed, and as his first host. He refuted or parried all the old lady's arguments, withstood her cajoleries, and kept Hawthorne as his guest.

But Hawthorne spent no small fraction of his time at Itapuá, and there one evening, returning from a ride together, Beltran said:

"I want you to go into the city with me to-morrow morning."

"I am going in, anyhow," Hawthorne replied.

"Yes, I know," said Beltran. "But I mean I want you to accompany me to Don Antonio's."

"Why?" Hawthorne asked.

"You see," Beltran explained, reining his horse to a walk, "you are not only the best friend I have, but almost the only friend I have. Every one of the intimates I left behind when I sailed for Spain has disappeared. Some are dead, some have gone to Guatemala or Peru or Spain and have not returned. My chums, my cronies, my intimates, have all vanished. Not only my friends, but nearly all my mere familiars. I never was intimate with Estanislao; he is much older than I, and the inequality in our ancestry was emphasised by the contrast between father's wealth and his very moderate means. The difference in our ages appears greater now than it did ten years ago. It ought to seem less, but I feel very young, while he is middle-aged and grave. Yet, of the acquaintances I left behind at my departure, I find on my return Estanislao is by far the nearest, or should I say the least distant? He seems very

distant. I could not think of calling on Estanislao to act as my best friend. Having no father, uncles, or brothers left, I must have my best friend with me when I speak to Don Antonio. Etiquette demands it. I am told that in my absence the younger set here are taking up the Porteño fashion and sending a mutual friend instead of going in person. But, as for me, even if I have seen the world and become very new-fashioned in other respects, I remain old-fashioned in some things. In this particular, I shall not adopt the imported mode, but shall stick to our ancient usage here, according to which a suitor must present his request in person, but must be accompanied by his best friend."

Suddenly Hawthorne realised what Beltran meant to say to Don Antonio. He reflected swiftly. Certainly he was a guest at Don Vicente's and a good friend to Desiderio. Yet his friendship with Beltran long antedated his acquaintanceship with the Mayorgas. Also, Desiderio had a father and brothers and uncles. At sea as he was about Spanish customs and in the dark as to their delicate punctilios, he thought he could not be far wrong.

"I'll go with you," he agreed.

And go he did, both in their best attire, on splendid, perfectly saddled horses, their servants neat and clean on cream-coloured mules.

Don Antonio, at sight of them, put on his waistcoat, rapier and coat. He was very urbane, but very formal. Snuff was exchanged. *Maté* was brought, with silver cups for all instead of gourds and a silver *bombilla* apiece. His choicest cigars followed.

When the cigars were drawing well, the courtly old Don let the conversation flag, his eyes on Beltran's face. Beltran made his formal request for Angelica's hand in the best style of Castilian ceremonial. Don Antonio listened with equal suavity and replied with all the usual compliments; with more than customary compliments. It was only after much circumlocution that he came to the point.

"I acknowledge," he said, "that there was an agreement between your lamented father and myself looking towards uniting the two families by mating his youngest son to my eldest daughter. The main article in our contract was that you and Angelica were to marry. I consider myself as

much bound by that agreement as your father would were he alive. But its chief provision was not a solitary and unqualified pledge. As there was not only never any formal contract drawn and witnessed and exchanged in duplicate, but not even any rough memorandum, in fact at no time a single scrap of writing embodying our mutual intentions, I am the sole repository of the stipulations, as I alone of living men ever heard them. The main clause was hedged about with many conditions, which your good father would be the first to avow were he in the flesh.

"The chief of the subsidiary provisions was the explicit understanding that either of us was free to cancel the agreement if alterations in the circumstances of either family made it less likely that the marriage would turn out prosperously and happily for both of you.

"I admit that the changes wrought in each family by deaths and births rather strengthen than weaken the validity of your pretensions. No property you were likely to inherit as the fifth son of a father even so wealthy as yours was, bears any colourable comparison to the possessions that you have fallen heir to and are yet to fall heir to, as sole representative of the Mendieta, Isquibels and Jarays; and while I am far wealthier than I was, richer in fact than I ever hoped to be, the utmost dowry I can bestow with Angelica will not be much larger, now that I have eleven children, than it seemed likely to be when I was far poorer and had only three. Therefore, your pressing your suit so promptly upon your return is not only a tribute to Angelica, in that it shows you still admire her at her age after ten years of separation, but a compliment to our family in general, for you are, in point of position and income, the most desirable bridegroom in Paraguay.

"Yet not in all respects.

"I need not remind you of the tragic misfortunes of your family and its connections during the brutal severities of Don Lazaro Ribera de Espinosa's governorship; how that harsh Intendente began with suspicions of the Jarays, Isquibels and Mendieta; went on to savage persecutions and ended by a sort of exacerbated hostility. I need not recall to you the long list of executions among your unfortunate kinsfolk and their harrowing circumstances. Youthful gallants just betrothed were torn from their sweet-



hearts, expectant bridegrooms from their affianced brides, newly married husbands from their spouses; young couples, full of hope and affection, were separated suddenly and forever; devoted consorts, parents of a growing family, were unexpectedly sundered.

"I need not recite to you the names of the victims. There cannot but crowd upon your memory the multitude of cases where men of unblemished reputation and lofty character were arrested without colour of law, and summarily shot without accusation or defense.

"You will remember how many doting fathers betrothed their dearest daughters with every prospect of life-long felicity and saw their lives ruined, sometimes even their intellects destroyed, by undeserved bereavements.

"The reservations between myself and your father had their origin in my misgivings on precisely this point. With the death of Don Lazaro and the appointment of Don Bernardo, my hesitancy vanished. Your father was then already dead, and your grandmother decided to send her favourite grandson to see the world. I made no demur. You have been absent longer than I could have foreseen. Tules was always fond of you, and has never abated her affection. Angelica is bound by the verbal agreement, of course. But I am free to cancel it if I see fit. I am also free to require a period of probation before I ratify it and make the ratification public. That period of probation I think it best to exact.

"I shall not be explicit. But what I have said of Espinosa's treatment of your kinsmen has an obvious application to present conditions, and what I have told you of the minor stipulations of my pact with your father is manifestly applicable. Circumstances have altered for both families, for both possible parties to a conceivable alliance. In particular, I cannot guess how you are going to stand with the existing government. You are able, ingratiating and experienced. This may appeal to the powers in control, or it may be a sufficient reason for suspicion, espionage, for arbitrary arrest and summary execution. Your death would be a grief to Angelica, even now. She likes and admires you. But while you and she are not formally pledged, it would not be an irretrievable misfortune. Am I to risk her desolation, her lifelong woe?

"You cannot ask it.

"Let me feel sure that you are in favour at headquarters and your second application will meet with no rebuff or delay."

Beltran stood up, bowed, and made his farewells at once.

(3)

Most of his evenings Hawthorne spent with Francia. When he returned from Itapuá he often learned that a messenger from the Dictator had come to seek him, and few days passed in Asuncion without a message requesting his presence at the Palacio.

"You cannot imagine," Francia said, "what a relaxation it is to me to associate with some one I can meet upon a footing of intellectual and social equality.

"I dare not permit any Paraguayan, be he Guarani, Creole, or old Spaniard even, to approach me except obsequiously. I am coerced by the traditions of the Viceroy, Intendentes and Governors. They remained seated and covered when giving audiences, while any visitors admitted stood hat in hand. I have felt it imperative that I exact for myself as Dictator as much deference as was accorded the mere representative of a distant king, but I have found it very difficult to extort, as you saw in the case of my godmother."

"Precisely the same difficulty," Hawthorne said, "has been encountered by General Alvear in Buenos Aires; and I was told by his predecessors."

"Even Liniers, according to the reports that reached us," Francia corroborated him, "found it necessary to remain standing himself to preclude his visitors from taking seats for themselves, even unasked, so free and easy did manners become from the first slackening of royal authority. His successors have had to resort to similar shifts.

"But whereas those transient chiefs insisted upon the punctilio out of mere vanity or from an inflated sense of the importance of their office and their newly-independent city, I, who would most willingly sit and chat with every comer, am compelled to be haughty, distant and stern. My Guaranies are strange children. Any one of them would

creep to my window in the dark not merely with the trustfulness of a devotee towards a confessor, but with a child's confidence in its parent. They pour out their troubles to me as instinctively as dreamers talking in their sleep. Yet not one of them ever ventures to the Palacio in my morning audience hour, so vividly do they stand in awe of me. The knowledge that I will receive and attend to the meanest supplicant coming in the dark never seems to lessen their veneration; each appears to think it a special favour never accorded before and never to be repeated. But did I unbend ever so little in my audience hour, their esteem for me and their fealty towards me would vanish like a puff of smoke. I could connive at Madrina Juana seating herself while I stood, for her preternatural youthfulness at her advanced age long ago inspired them with a superstitious regard for her. I could safely ask Don Beltran to be seated; for, as her grandson, he is exalted in their esteem and shares some degree in the almost sanctity that haloes her about in their imagination. I can accord the privilege of conversing with me as you do to any foreigner, for the mass of Paraguayans look upon all foreigners except Spaniards with, as it were, a stupefaction of wonder.

"But if I were to relax my austere demeanour to any Guarani, to any Creole, even the richest, to any Spaniard, even to the Bishop himself, the report would spread from San Ignacio to Corpus, from Curapaiti to Forquilha and Voquita; the rumour would run that I am no such Supremo as they have thought, but a mere man like any other man. Their subserviency would evaporate, my hold on them dissolve and my power be no more.

"The mere instinct of self-preservation forces me to be magisterial and imperious at all times. To curb the familiarity of our unsophisticated Creoles and the presumption of our overweening old Spaniards I have to appear even harsh and arrogant.

"And even if the exigencies of my position did not constrain me, were I free to indulge my tendencies to sociability, Paraguay contains not one single human being capable of affording me stimulating conversation. Don Eustaquio is more than my match in matters of mere law, but his mind is a blank on all other subjects; Don Hermengildo is my rival in all departments of knowledge, but the adaman-

tine barrier of his narrow theological bigotry clamps him in on all sides and makes him my enemy.

"I yearn for conviviality, I famish for human intercourse. It is eight years since Bishop Nicolas Videla del Pino died. He was my mental compeer in all respects and surpassed me in many ways, but he lived only two years after coming to Asuncion, so that the keen relish I felt for his company left me more lonely by contrast.

"Since his death I have tasted the joys of associating with one nearly on a level with myself only in the society of foreigners. Four Englishmen have reached Asuncion; Don Juan Robertson sojourned here for three considerable periods as an importer and merchant; and his brother for two shorter periods. They were young men of fair education, wide experience and open minds. A Don Enrique Battam paid one short visit to Asuncion. From him I purchased my telescope, theodolite, air pump, electrical machine and my two large globes, all displacing far inferior instruments I had previously possessed. He was immeasurably my superior in mathematics, but amazingly ignorant and prejudiced in all other departments of knowledge. Don Tomas Parlett gave me much pleasure during his brief interval of sobriety on his first arrival here. But he is besotted and his intellect thereby clouded. You are the only companion I have had or have who can meet me on a footing of equality in languages, mathematics, general information, pliability of mind and plain common sense."

Hawthorne had learned early in his acquaintance with Francia never to interrupt his tirades, particularly when he was talking about himself. When Francia came to the natural conclusion of this harangue and signified as much by throwing away his extinguished cigar and lighting a fresh one Hawthorne expressed his gratification at the Dictator's compliments.

"Not an approach to flattery, I assure you," Francia declared. "You are a mental tonic, as I have told you again and again.

"Which reminds me that I have waited in vain for you to mention eclipses. Have you gone over my calculations?"

"I handed them back to you," Hawthorne said. "I declined to take them."

"Declined to take them!" Francia cried. "It is my dis-

tinct recollection that you promised to plough through my computations and check up every operation for possible errors."

"That was your proposition to me," Hawthorne replied. "I proposed that I merely take the data for each eclipse and make my calculations without seeing yours at all and that we then compare the two sets."

"I remember now," Francia admitted. "And how did you come out?"

"According to my results," Hawthorne said, "the eclipse of August 6th, 1823, will not be visible at Asuncion at all. I am in doubt as to the eclipses of October 29th, 1818, and August 27th, 1821. The edge of the track of each, as I plot it, just brushes Asuncion. If visible at all here they will be barely discernible as mere dents in the rim of the disk. I am not sure about the eclipses of June 16th, 1825, and October 29th, 1837, but I think they ought to show here as large notches or scallops out of the sun's face, like a greedy boy's first bite out of a cake.

"I am certain the eclipse of May 27th, 1835, will appear at Asuncion as an impressive partial eclipse, with more than half the sun covered and a notable diminution in brightness."

"Yes," Francia interrupted. "All that is very gratifying. I remember my results well enough to make out that you agree closely with mine. But how about the eclipse of 1839?"

"To paraphrase your own words," Hawthorne said. "If you survive until March 15th of that year you will behold a total eclipse of a full minute's duration."

"The Ides of March! The Ides of March!" Francia repeated gleefully, taking an enormous pinch of snuff. "A lucky day, perhaps, for at least one disciple of the great Julius. I may very well hope to live twenty-three years yet or even forty, if the climate of Paraguay agrees with me as well as with my godmother. I may revel in watching that total eclipse in 1839. But no longevity to which any human being ever attained, except in the absurd legends of the patriarchs in Genesis, could carry me to any later eclipse which might show total at Asuncion. And a total eclipse of the sun I conceive to be the most stupendous pageant upon which human eyes can gaze, far surpassing in

emotional power every other spectacle or phenomenon, more magnificent, more portentous, more majestic.

"And you confirm my forecast that I may behold one!"

"Did you bring your papers with you?"

"Yes," Hawthorne answered, "I have them in my pocket."

Francia sighed. "This breeze," he said, "is very agreeable, but it will not allow us candles out here. The night is really too oppressive to remain long indoors, especially with tapers burning. But let us go for a moment into my study and compare our computations."

A cursory comparison put him in a state of high glee. He rubbed his hands and kept snuffing prodigiously.

"Our greatest discrepancy," he said, "is not a full league in the line of the middle of the track of any shadow; not two seconds as to duration. And those are on the eclipse of 1823, which does not matter at all. As to the great event on March 15th, 1839, we agree to the incredible exactitude of one-twelfth of a league as to axis and one-tenth of a second as to duration. I shall be a proud and happy man if I live to see that day! I shall feel I have not lived in vain. I shall die in peace."

He took more snuff, by large pinches, in a transport of ecstasy.

Hawthorne was mute.

"Let us get a breath of air," Francia suggested. "I am glowing with excitement."

In the garden he changed the subject.

"There is another matter upon which I have been waiting for you to speak. You have not told me what you thought of my troops."

They were just by the table as Francia spoke.

Hawthorne took up a fresh cigar, lit it at the guttering candle, and, on Francia taking his seat, lowered himself slowly into his. He puffed his cigar meditatively and began slowly:

"I have been much interested," he said, "to learn all I could concerning the resistance to Belgrano's invasion. I have talked about the campaign of liberation, as they call it, with Yegros, Zevallos and Gamarra."

"And also with Caballero and Cabañas," Francia interjected.

"And also with them," Hawthorne admitted. "It seems to me that Belgrano failed only because he entered Paraguay with too small a force and capped that initial temerity by the incredible blunder of dividing his insufficient forces. Had he accumulated fifteen hundred men before he crossed the Paraná instead of venturing with only eight hundred he would have succeeded."

"Your surmise is correct," Francia told him, "but I do not see what that has to do with my troops."

"They tell me," Hawthorne continued, "that Belgrano lost but eleven killed and twelve wounded out of eight hundred men in four months' marching and fighting, including many skirmishes and the three so-called battles involving his entire forces"

"True," said Francia, "but I fail to see the application."

"They tell me also," Hawthorne proceeded, "that between five and six thousand patriots, all told, gathered to oppose him and that they lost in killed nearly a hundred and had about two hundred men wounded."

"True again," said Francia, "but how relevant?"

"The relevancy to my valuation of your troops," Hawthorne replied, "is this: I deduce that Belgrano was overcome by the accumulation on his front and flanks of an overwhelming force of adversaries rather than really beaten either at the second fight at Paraguay or at the semi-battle on the Tacuari. The discrepancy in the numbers killed on both sides demonstrates that the invaders were far better marksmen than the patriots. That five thousand Paraguayans should kill only eleven enemies in three months argues them neither confident, venturesome nor pugnacious.

"So mild a campaign is not a severe schooling for a national soldiery and very few of your soldiery can be veterans of even so moderate an experience. They can form at most only a small nucleus of your present forces."

"A very small nucleus," Francia cut in.

"Therefore," Hawthorne summed up, "since nearly all your soldiers are men who have never known manœuvring against a foe in the field and since few have been under even a semblance of hostile fire, I think it a downright miracle that a bookish man, never near a battle or skirmish, never even with any force in the field, without any military

training whatever, has been able to create so smart appearing a body of troops out of such unpromising material."

"There is not a man under five feet seven nor over thirty-five years old," Francia retorted. "Why unpromising material?"

"Because most of them," Hawthorne replied, "have never been so much as on a regular expedition; few have ever faced an enemy in the field, fewer have taken part in anything like fighting, and fewer still have been under fire; and that fire did not amount to much, even at Paraguay."

"All just observations," Francia ruminated. "And you think I have done well with them?"

"Miraculously, as I said before," Hawthorne replied.

"I hear a reservation in your tone," Francia gloomed. "What more could I do?"

"You," said Hawthorne, "could accomplish no more. Perhaps no other man could accomplish as much. Under any other man they might deteriorate. But it is certain that you have carried them as far towards being soldiers as could any man not experienced in actual warfare."

"Experienced in actual warfare!" Francia echoed. "There are only two such men in Paraguay."

"I was speaking theoretically," Hawthorne disclaimed, "and in general terms."

"Let us be practical," Francia said, "and particularise even to personalities. I cannot make you my drill-master, as you are an alien in all respects. The men would not tolerate it, and I myself am suspicious of all foreigners and let none any further into my secrets than would be safe if I were sure he were an enemy plotting against me. I shall never give a foreigner any official employment, on principle, far less a position of trust, even if he had saved my life ten times."

"I asked nothing, hinted nothing," Hawthorne countered, "nor did I mean myself."

"I know," Francia said. "I am only mixing generalities with my personalities. There remains Don Beltran."

"I did not name him either," Hawthorne disavowed.

"You did not need to name him," Francia declared; "the inference was inevitable. What interests me most in your judgment of my troops is that it coincides with mine."



They are adequate for maintaining internal peace, but, should Paraguay be menaced from without by a really formidable force, they would break like a broomstick, instead of slashing like a sabre. I had thought of Don Beltran as a godsend the moment I heard of his participation against Soult and Massena. He has learnt war in a real school. He has watched more men die in an hour than were hurt on both sides in the three months from Belgrano's crossing the Paraná till he surrendered. He has the experience.

"But experience is not everything. I am studying that young man. He may be a dangerous firebrand. He might side with the old Spaniards, for all he and his father before him were Creoles born and his grandmother a loyal patriot. But I trust not. I should grieve to think of him in a dungeon or on the *banquillo*. He is too good to imprison or shoot. Even if loyal he may be too vain or fickle to confide in. I must be sure. But if he is what I take him to be he may be of much use to me and render noble service to his country."

"I agree with you," Hawthorne said.

"I hope," Francia said, "you also agree with me that a game of chess would be agreeable."

"I do," Hawthorne assented.

Francia lost the first game and won the second.

"I always prefer castling on the queen's side," he said, taking a big pinch of snuff.

"By the way," he added, "I have been waiting to show you my arsenal. You saw the facts and told me the truth about my troops. Perhaps I may gain some useful hints from you about my arsenal or have some of my views corroborated. Come in the morning. I cannot exhibit an arsenal in the dark."

Hawthorne took the hint and his leave.

## CHAPTER XXVI

## THE LISTS

## (1)

AT the Palacio, early next day, Hawthorne found the Dictator much as he had seen him on his second morning visit, when the sentry had had him arrested by mistake; only this time Francia had in his lap not a leather belt, but a blue cloth uniform coat and the soldiers held pinioned before him not a shoemaker but a tailor. To greet Hawthorne Francia rose, hanging the coat over the back of the chair.

"Be seated, Don Guillermo," he said. "We are again subjected to the annoyance of a trifling but unescapable interruption."

And he reseated himself, nervously fingering the coat.

"I tell you," he said, glaring at the tailor, "I will prove it to you."

The wretched tailor shrugged both shoulders and rolled up his eyes.

"Why are they so slow with the table?" Francia exclaimed testily.

As he spoke there lurched into view from under the colonnade a sort of clump of men, all tugging and lifting to the limit of their strength, half carrying, half dragging a huge, unwieldy table, built with the clumsy massiveness and unnecessary lavishness of wood common in Paraguay. It was more than five feet wide and all of twenty long, had six mighty legs, connected and braced near their lower ends by great cross-beams, while its top was a slab of lapacho wood a span thick. Barely moving their load they shuffled across the *patio*.

When the table was placed near the Dictator's chair, Bopî appeared and laid upon it a bolt of blue cloth.

"Where is that assistant?" Francia queried, waving away the porters.

Just at that moment Zorilla entered with six soldiers, two of them holding another tailor, even smaller and paler than the first. He carried a square, yard-stick, tape-measure, shears, chalk and other tailors' appliances.

Francia sprang to his feet and himself unrolled the bolt of cloth and spread it smoothly on the long table. Casting the coat upon it, he seized the square, tape and chalk from the trembling apprentice and proceeded to measure each seam of the coat and to lay off on the cloth patterns for pieces identical with those of which the garment was constructed, pausing to send Bopî for a pair of compasses, with which he checked and verified his measurements.

When every outline was clearly chalked he turned to the tailor.

"Observe, *bribonazo*," he said, "that I have left a wide margin for seams around every piece. I have not crowded the outlines nor skimmed the intervals. Note that a generous allowance of cloth for such a coat as you have made comes to a full quarter of a yard less than you report that you consumed in making this botch. Do you acknowledge all this?"

"It is true," said the tailor sullenly. "I must admit it."

"Then I have proved, as I told you I would," Francia concluded, "that you either stole or wasted a full quarter of a yard of the nation's cloth."

"Wasted unintentionally perhaps," the tailor admitted, "but not stole."

"I am not so sure about that, *bribon*," said the Dictator, taking snuff. He pointed to a part of his drawings.

"Observe," he went on, "that these pieces are laid off on a single quarter of a yard of cloth. Now I am about to measure off for you the amount here proved necessary for a uniform coat of this cut, less one quarter of a yard. You will then make and bring for my inspection a coat like this; when approved, that coat will wipe out all scores up to the hour at which you present it, and I will pay you as usual for making it."

"But," the tailor protested, "I cannot make a coat out of so little cloth."

"Perhaps not," Francia retorted, "and then again you might find a quarter of a yard of similar cloth lying about somewhere, forgotten or unnoticed. If you bring the coat, well and good. If not, perhaps I can find a gallows or a gibbet standing about somewhere disused and ignored."

The tailor visibly cringed.

"I shall do my best," he whined.

"You'll succeed," Francia chuckled, "have no fear."

Then, to Bopî, he called:

"Where is that box?"

While Bopî was gone he measured and cut off the amount of cloth he had stipulated.

When the coffer was brought he unlocked it with a small brass key, took from its depths a carefully considered quantity of linen thread, which he laid on the cloth, and then, from a sliding tray, picked out some needles.

"Here," he said to the tailor, "is the cloth, here is the thread, here are the needles; a big one, two medium-sized, and three small."

"I cannot make a coat with so few needles," the tailor expostulated. "No skill can avoid breaking needles. There should be at least one more of each, by just allowance."

"Behold them!" Francia replied. "In all things, as in this, you shall have justice. Now go!"

And he sat down, calling:

"Bopî! *Maté*."

Over their steaming gourds he observed to Hawthorne:

"You may think such minutiae beneath my dignity. Perhaps they are. But success in all things, particularly in economy, is made up of small scrutinies of details. The Intendentes were always in debt because they never considered how to make their income cover their outgo nor how to adjust their expenditures to their resources. All South America has had the habit, since the days of Pizarro, Irala and Mendoza, of incurring obligations without considering how or where the money to meet them might be raised. I must make both ends of my accounts meet; I must save; I must accumulate cash, I must keep my soldiers paid, clothed, fed, housed and satisfied. I must not impoverish my people with imposts. Therefore I must watch every needle, every inch of thread."

As he was declaiming Bopî returned and spoke, of course, in Guarani.

"Who?" Francia queried. "Well, have her shown in."

Hawthorne saw approach Doña Pilar Carisimo.

Francia rose haughtily.

"Well," he queried, "what brings you here?"

"My husband," the poor lady gasped, tottering where she stood, the tears running down her face.

"Your husband, Madam," the Dictator said severely, "merely went to prison. You know as well as I do that he should have been sent to the *banquillo*. Be thankful that my soft-heartedness led me to shirk an unpleasant duty and punish him less than he deserved. Rejoice that he is alive."

"But he will die," Doña Pilar wailed. "He cannot live a week as he is and such a horrible death."

"What do you mean?" Francia demanded.

"They riveted on him," Doña Pilar explained, "*grillos* of the usual size. They are far too small. Both ankles have ulcerated, the left all the way round and deeply, and the ulcers on the other leg are almost meeting. Nothing can avert gangrene and he is certain to die."

"Bopî!" Francia called. "Bring the lady a chair."

He next offered her *maté*, and, on her declining that, had Bopî fetch water, which she drank. He then gave Bopî further orders and, as he went off, rooted among the litter on his little table till he found a quill and his notebook, on a page of which he scribbled.

When Bopî returned with a small vial he handed it to Doña Pilar.

"There," he said, "you have some Guarani eye-lotion for your husband's ulcers. Here is the order to have riveted on him fetters as large as are necessary for his corpulence, as large as is safe, considering his very small feet. But the first set will not be filed off until the second are in place and nothing will be done unless you show the cash to pay for all, for I cannot charge the state with the cost of more than one *barra de grillos* for each prisoner."

The lady's feelings must have been as mixed as Hawthorne's, who could not conjecture whether her tears were more the product of surprise and gratitude or of rage and contempt.

When she was gone Francia said:

"In your capacity of licensed visitor of prisons I wish you would sound her old fool of a husband and tell me how big a fine he thinks he can pay. Then I'll double it and get him off my mind. These women worry me to death."

He sighed, lit a fresh cigar and resumed:

"Now I can show you my arsenal."

He led the way to a wagon-archway at the back of the *patio*. It was blocked by gates of stout iron bars, tall and spiked at the top, fastened with big brass padlocks at bottom, middle and as high as a man could reach. When they had passed this and it was locked behind them they confronted an equally tall set of gates of wood, heavily iron-bound. When these were unlocked and opened they showed six inches thick or more. Francia fastened them behind him with two bars and a bolt inside, hanging to the bolt the padlocks he had removed from the front.

"Here we resign ourselves to do without cigars," Francia remarked, throwing his on the pavement and carefully treading it out. Hawthorne did the same.

There was a third set of gates like the first. These admitted them to a *patio* slightly larger than the one they had left and all bare pavement, so that it appeared much more extensive than the fore-court with its twelve orange-trees. Hawthorne recognised the odour of gunpowder he had smelt in the dark as he crossed it in the moonlight the memorable first evening he had spent with Francia.

Under the left-hand arcade of the court were cannon; forty cannon; twelve iron and twenty-eight brass. Two were sixteen-pounders, both of iron; five were brass twelve-pounders, no two of the same design; there were six brass and ten iron eight-pounders; three six-pounders, brass, and as odd as the twelve-pounders. The rest were brass four-pounders.

Only the six brass eight-pounders were mounted ready for use as a field-battery, on wheeled gun-carriages with limbers and caissons. The seven largest guns were indeed fitted with carriages, but without wheels and scarcely better than the rough skids on which the other twenty-five rested.

Hawthorne examined them carefully.

"You approach them with a sort of reverence," Francia remarked.

"I tugged at the ropes with the rest," said Hawthorne, "all up and down the valleys from Merida and Trujillo to Caracas during Bolivar's great ninety days. One comes to feel that a gun is as much alive as a ship."

The far side of the *patio*, facing the gate, was all one store-house of small arms under the colonnade.

Hawthorne gazed at some two thousand good muskets and carbines, ranged in well-made racks, and at an amazing collection of blunderbusses, fowling-pieces, musketoons, matchlocks, arquebuses, firelocks, wheel-locks and other antiquated or obsolete weapons, all ranked up in piles like cord-wood, fully four thousand of them. With these were pell-mell heaps of horse-pistols, dags, and other old-fashioned and rococo weapons perhaps more numerous than the antiquated hand-guns. There were also some three thousand pairs of reasonably good pistols.

The third side of the *patio* was all sabres, fully eight thousand of them, half of them good and in racks, the rest of obsolete patterns, piled up higgledy-piggledy, mixed with hangers, rapiers, courtswords, cutlasses, daggers, poniards, even foils; every sort of stabbing and slashing weapon, all more or less rusted.

Between the two largest heaps was a large grindstone. Francia stared at it and called:

"Bopî!"

When the boy appeared he went straight to the grindstone and began to turn the handle.

Francia unsheathed his long sabre, squinted along the edge, held it to the grindstone, and when, after many inspections and applications, it was to his taste, resheathed it.

"I have read somewhere," he remarked, "about a Hindoo proverb to the effect that a sharp sabre cuts in any hands. Mine are not the least skilled nor the weakest in Paraguay, but they grow older each night. I keep my sabre sharp."

Bopî had already vanished.

In the portion of the arcade to the right of the gate as they had come in, were disposed some two thousand lances, all apparently in good condition. On the other side of the gate were ranked under the colonnade symmetrical pyramids of cannon-balls; one of six-pound balls, many of four-pounds, and a fair supply of eight-pound balls; but none of twelve or sixteen pounds that Hawthorne saw. He noted silently that the supply of ammunition for the small arms and of powder was as inadequate in proportion to the number of arms as were the balls for the cannon.

"These are all the cannon in Paraguay," Francia said,

"ten only excepted. I keep two at Forquilha and two at Voquita in case of the improbable eventuality of a Portuguese invasion. The other six are at Neembucú to command the river."

At this moment Bopî appeared, from what direction Hawthorne could not guess, and spoke some words in Guarani.

"Who?" Francia snapped. "Oh, show him in."

And he smiled and rubbed his hands.

Bopî returned with a gunsmith and porter, carrying eight muskets newly repaired.

Francia examined the lock and pan of each musket, picked up each in succession, set it to his shoulder, sighted along the barrel, pulled the trigger, and, when the flint struck good fire, laughed like a boy.

As he handed the last back to the porter he turned to Hawthorne, his face all smiles, and exclaimed:

"What do you think, Don Guillermo, will my muskets carry a ball to the heart of an enemy?"

On Hawthorne's assenting he concluded:

"We'll go out by way of my study and the garden."

(2)

That very afternoon there was a full meeting of the revolutionists at Dr. Bargas' wine-shop. Parlett himself had left word with Don Vicente, who told Hawthorne when he returned from the Government House.

Hawthorne had learned never to take liberties with any climate. After dinner he slept out his siesta, but lost no time when he woke. To the wine-shop he went direct, as nobody ever attempted concealment about resorting to it and it was usually well filled, often crowded.

Crowded it was when he arrived as on his first introduction to his fellow-conspirators. Also Dr. Parlett was similarly ensconced in the portico. Inside there was a great deal of snuff-taking, health-drinking and laboriously trivial chat following greetings. Presently Parlett whistled some bars of "Yankee Doodle" and the company at once relaxed and Dr. Bargas remarked:

"Gentlemen, my house is yours. Use it as you please."



Spoke Don Eustaquio:

"As acting secretary it falls to me, Señor Don Guillermo, to communicate to you that we have taken your advice and have formed a provisional government so that we may act as a belligerent nation from the moment we become insurgents. Don Atanacio has been chosen President and commander-in-chief of the army, and in imitation of your honoured nation, we have designated Don Segundo to be Vice-President and to take his place should we lose him; Don Cipriano is to be finance minister, and Don Hilarion, treasurer; Don Sinforiano, minister of war, Don Jerman, general of infantry, Don Fulgencio, commander of cavalry, and Don Fernando, minister of justice; Don Jacinto, notary, and myself, secretary. Don Atanacio will now preside."

"Don Atanacio," said Cabañas, "wishes to preside only to this extent: that he reminds you and may from time to time repeat that no semblance of a formal meeting must appear. We are casually met at a wine-shop."

"I am to understand," Hawthorne asked, "that you accept me as an accomplice?"

A chorus answered him.

"Then it grieves me to have to tell you," Hawthorne said, "that I fear we are already suspected."

The chorus this time was of alarmed queries instead of enthusiastic acclamations.

Hawthorne told of Francia's coupling mention of the wine-shop with a sneer about his hosts of new friends; of the meaning way in which he had shown first his troops and then his arsenal; of his apparently accidental remark that he never let a foreigner further into his secrets than would be safe if he were an enemy and a plotter; and especially of his repeating part of the English words of "Little Bo-Peep" at Ibirai.

"Don Guillermo," spoke Parlett from the door, still glancing behind him, "has already told me that. There is no indication in it that old Sour-Face has wind of us, for I was a great deal in his company just after I came to Asuncion, before he tired of his last new toy, and his Bopî was the first I saw. I dubbed him Bo-Peep then and there and sang the song for him. He is very vain of catching foreign words at once, and made me drill him till he had the whole

song correctly. His other suspicious utterances are just samples of the chance shots he is everlastingly letting off at unexpected moments to test any one he talks with."

The assembly fully agreed with him, and their alarm palpably disappeared.

"Our minds are easy so far," said Cabañas. "What next?"

"I should like to ask," Hawthorne said, "why a finance minister and also a treasurer are necessary? Why not one man for both offices?"

The gathering was visibly embarrassed.

Don Bernardo finally replied.

"It is a tradition from early colonial days," he said, "never to entrust any one man with the collection, care and disbursement of public moneys. Whenever the custom was experimentally transgressed the innovation worked badly. So we follow precedent. Don Cipriano will collect contributions, Don Hilarion care for the funds, and both concur in disbursements."

"Have you any more questions, Señor Don Guillermo?" Cabañas queried.

On Hawthorne's replying in the negative Don Eustaquio said:

"We have already progressed remarkably. Every old Spaniard approached has joined us except Don Prudencio la Guardia. Many Creoles have also joined us. We have signed promises of contributions of money or lump silver to the amount of two hundred thousand *pesos*, which is fully half a year's revenue of the existing government. In spite of the inquisitorial and prolonged searches and the repeated proclamation of severe penalties, there are still arms concealed in Paraguay, even in Asuncion; many arms and not a few of them good. These are at our service, and we have even in this brief period learned of four hundred good muskets, thirteen hundred small arms of various old-fashioned makes, and three hundred cavalry lances; while every one of our sympathisers has a good sabre and a pair of pistols in excellent order; some have two pairs of pistols and several swords."

"That sounds all very fine," Gamarra put in, "but what good are pistols and muskets without powder?"

"Powder is not altogether lacking," Guerreros replied.

"Nearly every one of our partisans has a little powder. Each has pledged himself to reserve half of what he has. The trade in powder is jealously watched, but the demand by hunters and gunners is continual and the authorities are used to it. Each of our party will buy his usual quantity a little oftener than usual and add half of each purchase to his hoard."

"That won't yield ten rounds a musket a year from now," Gamarra sneered.

"Also," Dr. Bargas prophesied, "by a year from now we shall have heard of many more muskets."

"We have thought of all that," Don Cipriano said, "and as it is impossible to buy powder except in trifling quantities and equally impossible to import or smuggle any, I have considered not only gathering contributions of cash, but of raw material. Don Guillermo told us at our first meeting of his ability to make powder. So Sinforiano and I have cast about for supplies of saltpetre and sulphur.

"Charcoal we can get anywhere and good willow charcoal in abundance. Sulphur is mined at Pirobebuy, but that, of course, is in the hands of our enemy. I am making enquiries in the hope that some other sulphur deposit has been discovered in the neighbourhood of Pirobebuy and concealed.

"There remains the question of saltpetre. The supply on hand is as jealously guarded and the importation as closely watched as is gunpowder itself. We must therefore gather it."

"Chile saltpetre," Hawthorne put in, "will not make gunpowder. It attracts moisture and becomes damp, as does any mixture of which it forms part."

"Irala learnt that, and we from him," said Don Cipriano.

"What profit then," said Hawthorne, "in gathering saltpetre?"

"Do you know how to refine saltpetre?" Don Cipriano queried.

"I do," said Hawthorne. "It is easy when one knows how."

"That is all we need," Don Cipriano replied. "For we make it. We have nitriaries all over Paraguay, one at least to each *estancia* or *hacienda*, ever since Saavedra's time."

"I know nothing," Hawthorne confessed, "of making

saltpetre. I handled it only as imported from India or China. What is a nitriary?"

"A dung-pile," Don Cipriano explained, "through which are mixed lime, ashes, butchers' offal, carrion, kitchen refuse and all sorts of decaying ordure, flesh and bones. It is kept covered from rain and stirred at intervals. Saltpetre forms just under its upper surface and even deeper. Crude saltpetre as gathered out of the nitriaries has been paid for cash down in silver at the rate of one quarter of the current price of gunpowder. Or if the producer wanted gunpowder in exchange, it was customary to accept four pounds of saltpetre as worth a pound of gunpowder."

"The nitriaries," Don Bernardo spoke up, "are all carefully listed and inspected and their product collected by the government. They have been ever since Saavedra established them. Francia has certainly been as inquisitive about them as about any other source of supply. We cannot hope to get anything from them."

"Already," said Don Cipriano triumphantly, "more than two hundred *estancieros* have halved their nitriaries, and, without visibly diminishing the old one, or leaving any trace of disturbance, have established new ones in secret. The produce of these will be gathered for us and in a year we shall have enough saltpetre to make five hundred rounds of powder for every musket and pistol we can gather. Charcoal, as I said, will be plentiful and of sulphur I have good hopes."

"Hopes," Machain said, "are fine food. Have we any hopes of cannon?"

"Rome," said Hawthorne, "was not built in a day, nor can freedom, from such an adversary as we have, be won quickly. The last thing we do before we take the field will be powder-making. The next to the last will be gun-finishing. Gun-casting must come before that and can only be attained after a long period of making and secreting iron pigs."

"I have not yet made up my mind how to arrange for accumulating our indispensable store of pig iron. On the one hand we might make it surreptitiously in the course of producing malleable iron, concealing the fact that we could make cast iron. This would be difficult but possible, and it recommends itself to me because I dread that the instant

that the word 'cast-iron' falls on our adversary's ears he will promptly ask me whether I can cast cannon: the mere idea of cast-iron will inevitably suggest casting cannon.

"On the other hand I perceive the improbability of concealing the existence of blast-ovens, however we disguise them as usual reduction-furnaces. I should like to hit upon some plausible reason for producing castings, even large castings, of obvious commercial value. It would then be equally easy to lay up a secret hoard of pig-iron and to disclaim any knowledge of cannon-casting as a far more difficult branch of the moulder's art.

"In any case, the establishment of reduction-forges for fabricating malleable iron would be a necessary preliminary to any such operations. Permission to set up such forges can only follow my discovery of tempting deposits of ore. I have not yet had a chance for any explorations of the country, as I have but barely familiarised myself with Asuncion and its environs. We must be patient."

"At the rate you indicate," Machain sneered, "we shall all die of old age before we initiate our insurrection."

"Everybody knows your impetuosity, Estanislao," Padre Melquiades replied. "The point is that Don Guillermo's project is a promising means of securing liberty at last. If you can offer an equally plausible scheme for attaining our ends more promptly, divulge it. We can all think of wild plans for harebrained ventures which might, if they worked without any hitch, accomplish all we aim at in a night. But they appear to all of us direct roads to prison and the grave, rather than clear paths to security. Precipitation can only lead us to ruin; our safety lies in deliberation."

There was a pause.

"As Don Estanislao has no more to say," Cabañas observed, "perhaps other matters might be brought up."

There was another pause.

"Since no more business appears," Don Eustaquio said, "I might offer general encouragement by impressing upon all of us how marvellously we are prospering as conspirators. I have here lists of those who have pledged money contributions, of those who have muskets in their possession, of those who have promised to accumulate powder, of those who have divided their nitriaries. These I shall now

pass around in order that all may see with their own eyes the spread of our organisation."

"Stop!" Hawthorne cried. "Do not let those lists go out of your hands."

Baiz paused, the lists in his hands, amazed.

"Why should he not pass them around?" Cabañas enquired. "Why should we not all see them?"

"Don Atanacio and Señors," Hawthorne spoke seriously. "Listen to me. Observe."

All faced him and he turned to Baiz.

"Don Eustaquio," he asked, "how many have seen those lists?"

"Besides myself," Baiz replied, "Don Atanacio, Don Bernardo, and Don Cipriano. The list of nitriaries has also been read by Don Sinforiano."

"Consider, Señors," Hawthorne said, "that every conspiracy has in it at least one possible traitor, and, if it extends to membership enough, comes to include certainly one spy. No one can suspect Don Sinforiano, Don Cipriano, Don Atanacio or Don Bernardo. The owners of the names on those lists are as completely safe with them as before they adhered to our movement. But every additional sharer of any of our secrets makes every one of us that much less safe. I move that the custodians of those lists and of any future similar lists be enjoined to keep them as close as possible, to show them to not one person more than is absolutely necessary.

"In particular, it seems to me that I should not see any one of those lists. I was assailed as a probable tool of the Dictator at our former meeting. You did me the honour to repudiate the suggestion. But, having been so assailed, I decline to put myself in any position where I am liable to fresh suspicions; and I repeat that the fewer who share the burden of knowing the names on those lists, the better for all."

"Surely," Don Bernardo said, "all this is excellent sense. Let us adopt the suggestion."

"Let us!" Dr. Bargas added. "Not even my renowned friend, the celebrated Marquess de Torretagle de Lima, could utter wiser words or display greater magnanimity."

(3)

Next morning Hawthorne reached the end of two matters which he was glad to conclude.

The Chilabers had revived rapidly in the open air of the harbour, under Dr. Parlett's ministrations. As they advanced towards convalescence Hawthorne found them progressively less likable. He had pitied them intensely in their dungeons: before he saw the last of them he almost regretted having rescued them.

When the fever had left them and they had been in the barber's hands, they appeared a comely and personable pair, as like as twins. Their aristocratic demeanour and patrician manners matched their good looks. But they displayed a flippancy of character in which daredeviltry for its own sake seemed a solitary virtue. Gratitude for Hawthorne's good offices they expressed with great volubility, but it never seemed more than a perfunctory surface utterance. Their imprisonment they regarded as a trifle, their venture in Paraguay as a lark, their escape as a bit of jolly sporting luck. They stubbornly denied any guilt in act or purpose; but the tales they told with endless facility to prove their innocence were seldom convincing, usually sounded like improvisations and sometimes conflicted with each other. By manifold innuendoes and implications they cynically hinted, in a sort of spirit of braggadocio, at what they openly controverted.

As soon as they were sufficiently recovered Hawthorne discussed with them their possible release and its probable terms. They agreed to the forfeiture of their brig and cargo with a sort of maudlin boisterousness, as if the whole had been a wager which they had lost at gaming.

Then Hawthorne gained some knowledge of the queer local form of passport for leaving Paraguay. Dr. Bargas drew up this document and Don Ponciano Velaustegui, Government Notary Public, read and reread it, examining every word with great care, before he affixed to it the large stamp or great seal of the Republic, an impression of which cost six *piastres*.

In form it was something between a letter and a petition to the Dictator, and read:

"Excelentísimo Señor:

"José Diego and Juan Alberto Chilaber, natives of Corrientes, now resident in this republic, appear before Your Excellency with all proper submission, and state that they wish to return to their native place in one of the ships of Don Meliton Isasi, a native of this republic residing on Calle Comercio in this capital and a citizen of Buenos Aires, which ship is now ready to sail for the aforementioned city. In order to be able to do so they beg Your Excellency and humbly petition that El Supremo will deign to permit graciously what they beseech and hope to obtain from Your Excellency's kindness.

"Most excellent Sir!

"(Signed) JOSÉ DIEGO CHILABER,

"JUAN ALBERTO CHILABER."

On this peculiar document the Dictator wrote:

"Asuncion, July 25th, 1816.

"Granted for the vessel specified or any other that presents itself."

And signed,

"J. G. DE FRANCIA,"

with his paraph below, as always.

While the concerns of the Chilabers had been lagging along from day to day under the obstructive methods of South American official business Hawthorne had also been occupied with efforts looking towards the release of Don José Carisimo.

Each day when he visited the prison, he had spoken to that equally corpulent and obstinate old gentleman. At first the recalcitrant Don was for dying a martyr in the grip of unconscionable tyranny, but his ulcers and resultant fever weakened his resolution. Then he offered two thousand dollars, *piastres* or *pesos* as the price of release. This he gradually increased until he promised full ten thousand. Then Hawthorne obtained the necessary papers. After which Doña Pilar spent some days in making up the necessary sum, part of which she had to borrow. Finally there was delay in getting a Treasury receipt from Don Olegario, then countersigns from Don Ponciano, Don Andres and Don Policarpo, and the Dictator's endorsement.



So it fell out that the very morning on which Hawthorne felt the relief of seeing the last of the Chilabers, as their brig grew small, hurried round the bend by wind and current, Don José was released from the prison. Francia had ordered that he should be brought out under guard and conducted to his house by way of Plaza Santo Domingo, the Jesuits' bridge, the Plaza and Calle Concepcion, to be set free at his own door. The procession conveying his mule-litter, six soldiers with Zorilla in charge, Hawthorne overtook as he returned from the landing-stairs.

At Mayorga's, during dinner, a message invited him to supper at the Palacio.

There Francia, after the usual greetings and snuff-takings, spoke in his most sudden fashion.

"You should be fairly well acquainted with Asuncion by this time."

On Hawthorne's assenting he enquired:

"And what do you propose to do next?"

"I had thought," Hawthorne said, "of visiting the localities where *yerva* grows."

"It falls out excellently then," said the Dictator, "that a brig is about to clear for the Ypané Guazu, carrying a party of *yerbateros* headed by the brothers Carbonel, two of the most expert and successful organisers of such expeditions. I have enjoined them to admit you as a guest to their vessel and caravan. Can you go?"

"Certainly," Hawthorne replied.

"Good!" Francia exclaimed. "The *San José* will be loaded by to-morrow. She will sail at once if you are ready. If not she will wait your convenience. I have assigned Don Benigno Lopez with six soldiers to accompany you and be answerable for your comfort, fair treatment and safety. You shall have a passport under the small stamp free of cost to you as you are on government business. I need not go over with you our many talks about stone quarries and locations possible for a penal settlement. You remember that as well as I do.

"And now let us have supper and get at our chess. I shall miss you while you are away."

## (4)

Hawthorne found himself unaffectedly sorry to leave Asuncion. Except the shambles and the prison there was not an unpleasant spot in the city, which had, in fact, the effect of a very big village, most of its buildings standing apart amid trees and shrubberies that made the shabbiest cottage picturesque. The inhabitants were as agreeable as their surroundings. The most shapeless hovel was, in that climate, a comfortable home for its tenants; the poorest hut was kept neat and clean; no one starved, even the lean beggars were well-fed, every human being was cheerful, easy-going and merry. The diversions of the population were simple and scarcely differed much between the poorest and richest. Festivals like Doña Juana's *fiesta* were rare events. So magnificent and inclusive a revel had not occurred in the whole country since the revolution. Hawthorne was a guest at several other *fiestas*; at Limpio, at the *estancia* of Don Lampadio Casal; at Ibirai, at the estate of his brother, Don Ladislao; in Asuncion at the house of Don Meliton Isasi; and others besides. They differed from Doña Juana's chiefly in having fewer guests and a less overwhelming profusion of eatables. In jollity and amenity they were much the same.

Besides *fiestas*, at which the diversions were feasting, music, dancing, cards and conversation, there were almost nightly *tertulias*; informal gatherings of the gentry. At these dancing seldom was indulged in, for dancing in Asuncion implied a band, there being in all the capital but two pianos, a half a dozen old tinkly harpsichords, a few violins, and fewer cellos; while the universal guitars hardly produced music enough for the boisterous local *sarandig*. Cards also were infrequent at *tertulias*, where the amusements were limited to eating and drinking, smoking, guitar-playing and singing, and conversation varied by many impromptu and innumerable puns. The natural vivacity of the gentlefolk and their whole-hearted enjoyment of their inartificial pleasures, made them all very delightful to Hawthorne. He not only had enjoyed the *fiestas*, *tertulias*, bathing parties, dinners and suppers in which he had participated, but had formed close friendships. He fairly

loved the entire Mayorga household, who treated him as a cousin, and felt still closer to old Doña Juana, who behaved towards him as a doting grandmother. No one could help loving Don Bernardo. Hawthorne also more than liked nearly all his closer acquaintances; Parlett in spite of his faults; Dr. Bargas, Don Gregorio, Don Baltasar, Señors Figueredo and Echagüe and all four Priors in spite of their foibles; Generals Yegros and Zevallos in spite of their ignorance, and tall Don Saturnino Bedoya and patrician General Cabañas with no reservation whatever.

Doña Juanita Bianquet he found even a more delightful companion on land than on shipboard. He spent many evenings at her *tertulias*, enlivened by numerous guests, frequent impromptus, occasional puns, general singing of choruses and universal jollity. Don Manuel was a genial host, and their favourite guests, a slender young buyer of *yerba* named Barbeito, and a stout, middle-aged tobacco dealer named Mendez, were good fellows. The innocent, home-keeping simplicity of their enjoyment of life touched Hawthorne greatly.

His feeling towards Francia puzzled him; his mind and heart were as much attracted to the man and scholar as his humanity and conscience were revolted from the skin-flint despot.

Chiefly and most of all he regretted leaving Asuncion while Cecilia was yet in prison. But he had at least alleviated her lot and a single false move or the right move made too soon or hastily, might ruin forever his chances of aiding in her escape or obtaining her open release.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE YERBALES

#### (1)

THE moment Hawthorne had announced his expedition, the entire Mayorga household was given up to preparing him for the disagreeable voyage up the river, the exhausting journey overland, and the trying stay at the *yerbales*. So expeditiously was everything procured that but

one day was needed to fit him out completely. Before sunset Tolomeo announced that all was ready, Carmelo and Don Vicente went over the outfit and confirmed his assertion and there was nothing more to delay departure.

Next morning he saw Cecilia at the prison. She expressed, with her habitual air of inscrutable sedateness, polite regret that she was not likely to see him again for a long period. The urbane perfunctoriness of her demeanour, tone and words was anything but comforting to a man who felt himself utterly in love with her. Her appearance of complete health and placid resignation, lit now and then by a flicker of girlish archness under her demure serenity, was, however, solacing to remember.

From the prison Hawthorne went to the Government House to pay his respects to the Dictator. From the Palacio he went at once on board the *San José*, through a small mob of friends and well-wishers who had assembled to bid him farewell. Don Gregorio, of course, was conspicuous among them. Tolomeo, Lopez and the soldiers were already on board in addition to the Carbonels and their men. The vessel cast off at once and had a fair wind till Asuncion was out of sight.

Barely until Asuncion was out of sight. From there on Hawthorne had need of all his philosophy to help him bear up against the unpleasantness and discomforts of the expedition. For eight days the craft made way against the current, tacking, and tacking again, from hour to hour, going aground about three times a day. Pedro Carbonel spent nearly the entire daylight quarrelling with the *vaqueano*, upbraiding him for his slowness, rating him for being a bad pilot or blaming him for calms or headwinds as fiercely as for *barraduras*; and kept it up at night so assiduously that it seemed to Hawthorne he never slept at all. The soldiers and their lieutenant, without any distinction of equality, played cards from sunrise till their noon meal, and from the end of their siesta until sunset. The peons similarly gambled among themselves, squabbling and disputing interminably, or slept huddled together in the shade of the bulwarks or even in the full fury of the sun-glare. The tiny cabin of the brig was hot, foul, and unbearably smelly; the food was unappetising; the heat terrific. But altogether these horrors were nothing to the

mosquitoes. It was with heartfelt relief that, not long after sunrise of the ninth day, they completed their hundred and sixty miles of navigation and Hawthorne saw Villa Real come into sight.

His relief vanished once he was ashore. The town was a sunbaked rectangular expanse of bare earth, diversified by mud holes and rubbish-heaps, outlined by three rows of ramshackle huts, rotten to the verge of collapse, and hideously filthy. The fourth side of the "market square" was occupied by the parsonage, a two-room cabin scarcely better than the Indians' hovels; three "warehouses" for *yerba*, merely larger barn-like huts, and the church, hardly bigger than the warehouses and no better built. There were patches of manioc, tobacco and maize behind the huts. Beyond them waved the dense primeval forest, a tangle of high timber, long interlaced and intertwined vines, close, thorny underwood, and spiky weeds.

The priest, a pock-marked Guarani who spoke little Spanish and whose jargon of that and church-Latin was harder to understand than his native tongue, gabbled fearful rumours that some of his Mbayás had crossed to hunt on the Gran Chaco and had seen a party of Guaycurús. He had made a novena to the Virgin, but even that might not prevent the terrible savages from crossing the river and massacring all his flock. He evidently had more dread of the nomads than faith in the Madonna.

Hawthorne spent two days at Villa Real, the most unroyal place he had ever seen and the least like a villa. He got whatever amusement and impression of novelty he could from looking on and listening while Pablo Carbonel cajoled the Mbayá alcalde into bringing in some of his herder friends from the stream-side glades in the forest, while he chattered with them for bullocks, of which he bought some hundred and twenty. Later he watched Pedro Carbonel superintending the unloading of the brig, the counting of the casks of rum and brandy, the unpacking, verifying and repacking of the bales of straw-mats, cotton-cloth, ponchos, caps, handkerchiefs, axes, knives, packs of cards, tobacco and sweetmeats; even one of *yerba*, for all must have their beloved *maté* daily on their way to the *yerbal*. What little diversion he derived from the humours of Mbayá character alleviated but slightly the depression

of his spirits from the enervating heat, the loathsome stench that pervaded the village, its incredible filth, the squalor of its dirty, pauper populace, the perpetual intrusions of snakes, toads and lizards, and the unremitting attacks of the swarms of mosquitoes. They were as bad ashore as on the river and worse at night than by day; and at night appeared centipedes on the ground and bats in the air, so that Hawthorne, though his hammock was slung in the priest's bedroom, the least uncomfortable shelter in the hamlet, slept scarcely at all.

Soon after sunrise of the third day they set out, in advance of them a sort of pillar of black cloud, where the myriads of bloodthirsty flies swirled and buzzed above the bellowing bullocks, guided, urged and herded by eight peons, red-capped, white-shirted, sashed or girdled with pink, blue or green, their legs in loose white cotton trousers, their bare heels kicking at the ribs of their roan ponies. Fifty more peons, open-shirted and jacketless like the *vaqueros*, mounted on mules, trailed along behind the herd. Among them were the pack mules, each led by a peon on a saddled mule. The other peons rode bare-back. Hawthorne, Lopez and the soldiers brought up the rear. Sometimes one Carbonel rode with them; sometimes both rode to the front of the caravan and sent back to hasten stragglers the *capataz*, their deputy overseer, who mostly kept ahead to choose the road for the cattle, bellowing ceaselessly under the assaults of their tormentors.

The peons, bare-necked, bare-armed and bare-legged, seemed proof against insects. Lopez, the soldiers, Tolomeo and Hawthorne, like the *capataz* and the Carbonels, were not only booted, but wore raw-hide leggings from ankle to hip, an armour against stings and thorns; gauntleted sheepskin gloves, and peep-holed masks of sheepskin, with flaps covering ears and neck. Even so they were welched and wealed with bites. At night they lit great fires in the glade where they camped and huddled in their smoke, the mules' noses forward close about them, and the cattle crowding on the mules for respite from their buzzing enemies. By day they floundered in and out of bogs, skirted miles of swamp, hacked their way by main strength through the mat of interwoven creepers, burst through thorn-thickets, and climbed up or plunged down the flanks of gullies.

Four days of this terrific exertion brought them out into a rolling upland country, threaded with crystal brooks, clean-soiled, and shaded by over-arching trees, separate and stately. Under the huge green-hearts and iron-woods wild oranges were plenty, and flowering bushes gay with blue and scarlet spikes of bloom. Over this country the going was easier and two long stages ended in a camp where Hawthorne was kept awake far into the night by an acrimonious and futile wrangle between the two Carbonels as to whether or not they might hope to come upon a forest of *yerba* trees the next day. Instead of cheerfully waiting for results, they debated this question with such violence that Hawthorne looked to see either stab the other, and caught Lopez giving covert signals to the soldiers to be ready to interfere between the enraged brothers.

Nothing, however, came of the squabble, and next morning, before they had gone a league, the *capataz* raised a yell which the *vaqueros* took up and the peons passed along. A *yerbal* was in sight. The Carbonels both spurred forward, Hawthorne keeping with them and the soldiers, and Lopez near him. Over the next hill they came into view of a broad valley, well wooded, intersected by numberless small brooks, tributaries of the stream which wound southward along its middle, to the considerable river of which a reach was visible some leagues away on their right.

Half a league down the valley they found the caravan halted in a pleasant, grassy glade, at the head of which welled up out of clean gravel between the two ledges of grey rock an astonishingly abundant spring of clear water. Full six feet wide and a foot deep it gushed from under the upper ledge, and the rivulet it fed sprawled cool and gurgling down the glade.

"Ha!" Pedro Carbonel exclaimed, "the saints made this place for our comfort. Here we camp; here we establish ourselves for our half year."

But Pablo stood nosing the air like a hound on a lost scent.

"I do not like this place," he objected. "There is a camp near here. Or there has been a camp near here. Some one is before us or has been before us."

There followed an altercation between the two Carbonels even more furious and violent than their disputation of the

night before. They howled and jabbered at each other in their uncastilian Spanish, varying their torrents of mutual abuse with cascades of vituperation in Guarani. Into this waste of breath the *capataz* interjected some short words. Their tone altered. After a brief discussion word was passed and the peons scattered, the *vaqueros* restraining the sumpter mules as well as the now meek herd.

Within an hour the peons returned on their dripping mounts and reported that no camp of *maté* gatherers was in any direction discoverable, certainly none near enough to trench upon their operations.

"Here we settle," said Pedro Carbonel.

But Pablo still sulked and repeated:

"Some one has been near here, not Indians, but some one like ourselves."

Sulkily he went about the construction of a settlement.

Horses and mules were unsaddled and unloaded and, with the cattle, driven off to browse and graze. The glade was cleared of every bush, and all fell to furious wood-cutting. Before the beginning of the brief twilight they had completed a big corral for the cattle and a smaller for the mules and horses. Between them Hawthorne had watched the erection of a singular structure. Short posts of entire palm trunks were planted solidly in deep holes so that they stood full twenty feet high and about twenty feet apart in each row and between the two rows. Betwixt each pair stakes, nearly as stout as the posts, were driven into the ground. Strong beams, extending from post to post and supported in the middle by the stakes, formed a framework, as if for a flat roof. Across them was laid a rough raftering of long poles. On these were spread squares of wicker-work woven of willowish branches of a bush growing by the stream. Over these were laid the coarse straw mats under bales of which several mules had panted from Villa Real. The construction was full twenty feet wide and all of eighty feet long. Two neat ladders were set against this.

When sunset came a ring of huge fires blazed round the corrals, and at each fire went on more or less roasting of beef from a bullock slaughtered not an hour before. After all had eaten their fill and smoked, there was some jabbering about division of watches. When that point was settled



two peons remained on the ground to maintain the fires which kept the squalling jaguars at a respectful distance in the underbrush; the rest, peons, *vaqueros*, *capataz*, Carbonels, soldiers, Lopez, Tolomeo and Hawthorne climbed the ladders. At that height above the ground not a mosquito buzzed, strange to say. All was peace, and Hawthorne, stretching himself out next to Lopez, gazed up at the incredibly clear myriads of tropic stars, wondered what they all would have done had it poured rain, and drowsed luxuriously into the only night's sleep he had had since leaving Asuncion.

Waked at the first streaks of light by the screaming of the parrots and the scarcely less shrill chatterings and howlings of the monkeys, Hawthorne watched the colony spring, even before sunrise, into an almost frenzied activity, which lasted through the appalling heat of the day with scarcely any interruption until sunset.

Taking the corrals and sleeping-platform as one of the shorter sides, Pablo Carbonel marked out a long rectangle down the glade. This was cleared of every remaining vestige of vegetation. Down the left hand side of it, starting from near the corral for the horses and mules, the peons built a long line of huts. First they pounded hard a square of ground ten, twelve or fifteen feet on each side. This pounding was done with huge mauls of lapacho wood, weighing twenty, thirty, even forty pounds apiece. These the peons wielded with ease, swinging them up high over their heads and bringing them down with astounding force. They thumped on the earth alternately in a rhythm like that of blacksmith's hammers, only much slower. Even in the terrible midday heat they kept up this fury of effort untiring, the sweat pouring off them in rivers. When each square was compacted to Pablo Carbonel's liking they set up posts at the corners of this earth floor. To these they fastened a rough framework of poles, wattled the sides, and covered the roof with a closely laid thatch of broad palm or banana leaves. A shallow trench round the three higher sides of the structure, to divert ground-water in rainstorms, completed each dwelling.

Continuing the line made by the huts to the end of that side of the open space and along the entire opposite side, they next constructed what they called *tatacuás* and *bar-*

*bacuás*, in pairs, one alternating with the other all the way, twenty-five sets altogether, one set for each pair of peons.

A *tatacuá* was a six-foot square of earth, beaten hard, like the hut-floors, with at each corner deeply driven into the ground a stout stake some four feet high and crotched or forked at its top, the four supporting a rough scaffold of peeled poles.

A *barbacuá* was a space of similarly compacted earth about fifteen feet in breadth and thirty in length. Posts and stakes supported beams on the long sides, and smaller beams pegged to these held up a sort of ridge-pole and close-set rafter-like cross-bars, the whole forming a sort of broad, low arch, like a rustic grape-arbour covered with wattle-work; on the outside of which, about half way up its curve, planks were set on bracket-like projections, making a kind of gang-way from end to end.

At the entrance of each space between a *tatacuá* and a *barbacuá* was heaped a great pile of cut wood for fuel.

The fourth side of the plaza, the short end opposite the sleeping-platform and corrals, was filled by a continuous warehouse shed, a mere long, low roof of rough rafters, thatched with palm-leaves over banana-leaves, the store-house for the merchandise in which their labours were to result.

After three days of incessant labour the settlement was in order. The fourth day was Sunday, which was passed in complete idleness. Most of the peons slept more than half the day. When awake they lolled about, smoking, drinking *maté*, singing or playing on guitars. What little they ate was jerked beef; slaughtering a bullock appeared to be regarded as too laborious to be worth the trouble.

On Monday the six months' *yerba* gathering began. Hawthorne went out with a brace of peons named José and Lazaro Nuñez, brothers like the Carbonels, but unlike as possible to those irascible Catalans. Being mostly Guarani with a dash of Andalusian ancestry, they were plump, jolly and good-natured; their dirty scarlet caps tilted rakishly over one ear, their water-horns slung jauntily, their bright new hatchets stuck in their belts, their ponchos dangling behind them. Through thickets of thorny underwood, through mats of creepers, over boulders and heaps of jagged rocks, around little bog-holes, up and down the flanks of

gullies they trudged, climbed, crawled or scrambled. Within a half hour they came to a considerable copse of *yerba-ilexes*, varying in size and shape from bushy shrubberies like pussy willows or alders to big handsome trees like sugar maples in their full young prime.

José and Lazaro set to chopping the smallest shrubs and piling up the cuttings in a great heap of glossy green. Within two hours the heap had grown to a stack of astonishing size. Then they argued in clucking, twanging Guarani about the direction of the camp, gesticulating violently, but smiling all the while. Then each filled his poncho with the cut boughs, heaved it up on his shoulders and staggered off, bent double under a loose, wobbling load, six or seven feet in every dimension. Beneath this unwieldy burden they tore their way back to camp, never losing their spirits nor their footing, their bare feet never slipping, their bare legs impervious to thorns, their brown skins shiny with sweat.

By their *tatacuá* they dumped their leafy bundles, back they jog-trotted for more, back again they trudged, and so on until their entire crop was piled in camp. So exactly had they calculated their cut, that they came in with their last load just at sunset. All day they had run, hewn, climbed and plodded, bathed in floods of sweat, exposed to the merciless sun, steamed in the breezeless humidity of the undergrowths, always in a cloud of gnats, flies and mosquitoes; their only solace a cigar or two, swallowing nothing save now and then a draft of luke-warm water and at noon a melon apiece! yet they were merry and lively.

So, apparently, were the other forty-eight peons. They trooped into camp from their last haul, not dragging exhausted limbs, but walking springily. Around the cooking fires they joked and chatted, they ate their fill, to an incredible number of pounds, of fresh-killed beef and sun-dried *charqué*, and as dusk turned to dark they climbed easily the ladders to the sleeping stage.

Tuesday was a repetition of Monday. On Wednesday each *tatacuá* was ablaze with a low fire of chunky logs, over which the peons scorched the cut boughs. As soon as the leaves curled up and began to dry they lifted the boughs from the rough lattice over the *tatacuá* and beat the leaves off into an ample hide net spread on the ground. When

enough were heaped on the net it was gathered up by its corners and the load of leaves carried up the *barbacuá* and spread over its arched top on the wicker wattles. When the whole arch was hidden under the crispy leaves a fire was built on the earth floor, the heat of which completely dried the *yerba* leaves. While the drying was going on one peon was posted on each of the outer plank-gangways, up and down which he patrolled with a long wand, beating out any sparks of fire which appeared among the curing leaves. After the *yerba* was thoroughly cured the fire was drawn, the earth floor swept clear of ashes and pounded again all over with the enormous mallets. Then the leaves and twigs were shaken down from the *barbacuá*'s lattice-roof, beaten into small pieces with flail-like sticks, and ground in a clumsy quebracho-wood hand-mill. The powder was packed into *tercios*. These were made by taking a rectangle of wet, fresh rawhide, doubling it, and hastily sewing up the two sides, forming a flat bag like a pillow-case. In this the *yerba* was packed tight with a sort of huge wooden pestle. When no more could be forced in, a flap of damp hide was drawn over the top and laced all around. The finished *tercios* were put in the sun, under whose heat they shrank, as the wet leather dried, to a rock-like hardness and heaviness. These blocks of salable *yerba*, about two hundred pounds each or over, were duly weighed at the warehouse door by the *capataz*, and each couple of peons credited with their product, reckoned by *arrobas* of about twenty-five pounds each.

Hawthorne found that two toiling peons gathered about two *tercios* each day.

By sunset on Thursday all the product of two days of gathering, one of drying, and one of pounding, grinding and packing, was under roof in the warehouses.

The next two days it rained in torrents and Hawthorne discovered the utility of the huts, which up to that time had been occupied only on Sunday.

On the second Monday morning, as a fair Sunday had nearly dried the soaked forest, the whole process began over again.

This time Hawthorne accompanied another couple of peons; ill-conditioned rascals with high-sounding names, doubtless false or falsely assumed by scoundrelly ancestors.

At any rate they answered to the impressive names of Luis Bazan and Juan Osorio. Unlike their names as possible they were, both complaining and whining, as nearly bad-tempered as thoughtless, improvident *yerbateros* could be. Hawthorne found them by no means as good company as the cheerful Nuñez twins, but studied them attentively and established a sort of intimacy with them. They confided in him their troubles and disappointments with endless iteration.

After following the process twice over he lost interest in its details, felt he had learned all that could be learned of *yerba*-gathering, and began to realise how tired he was of a diet of too-recently killed beef, too-aged *charqué* and flavorless melons, tempered only by coarse Paraguayan cigars.

Accordingly, soon after dawn of the second Friday, he looked over his fowling-piece, intent upon game. He would not have been above a bag of a monkey or two, if nothing better offered, would have shot parrots with eagerness; but he really hoped for duck, even for royal duck, if he could find a pond. The big bustards, rather like wild turkeys, which lurked in the underbrush, would have been much to his taste. He even might have the luck to shoot a water-hog or a wild boar.

Hero had passively endured the discomforts of the voyage and journey, faithful and resigned, but never for one instant a happy dog. At sight of the fowling-piece his dull eyes brightened, his listless inertia vanished; he frisked about vivaciously, barked joyously, and was all that a Malvinas pointer should be.

Lopez had spent his time in camp as on the river in ceaseless gambling with his ruffians, and had shown not the slightest sign of interest in anything except the cards. But the moment Hawthorne appeared, gun in hand and with Hero gambolling about him, the lieutenant was alert, every lazy inch of him awake. Instantly his men were no longer boon companions on a footing of equality, but docile privates, ready to jump at any order, while he was completely the responsible officer, gravely aware of his duty.

He was polite to the last requirement of Castilian standards, but he made it clear to Hawthorne that he was responsible for his safety and that he would not allow him to

plunge alone into the forests. Going out with two peons, he explained, was perfectly safe, as they were adepts at woodcraft and cautious of their own safety. Game, on the other hand, frequented just those stream-sides along which *yerba* trees never grew and which *yerbateros* avoided not only for that reason, but as dangerous.

"Don Benigno," Hawthorne objected, "El Supremo said nothing to me to inform that I was to be practically your prisoner."

"Señor Don Guillermo," Lopez replied, "you are nobody's prisoner, unless you are El Supremo's. But reflect that El Supremo is chary of information, and be good enough to take my word for it that he told me that if you did not return safe and sound I should most assuredly be shot, as I shall be if any harm comes to you."

Upon Hawthorne asking what he required Lopez declared that it would be sufficient if he followed a hundred yards or so behind with two soldiers. He promised to do nothing to scare off game.

Hawthorne took a careful observation of the sun, noted the time of the day on his watch, and set off in a direction taken by none of the *yerbateros*, guiding himself by compass only. He made a wide circuit, proposing to return to the camp far from the track by which he had set out.

Tolomeo carried his gun, Hero explored the thickets and all three revelled in a delightful day. Some birds like pheasants were fairly abundant and before noon Hawthorne was glad of his guard, as not only Tolomeo but both soldiers were laden down with them; even after the five humans and their dog had eaten to repletion of the liberal selection which Tolomeo had plucked, cleaned and roasted for their midday meal.

A brief siesta succeeded their dinner. Then Hawthorne followed a water-course which flowed in a curve bowed to the eastward and promised to bend north-westward and conduct them campwards as he had intended.

About a league from where they had rested Hero began to behave most peculiarly and Hawthorne conjectured he had roused a wild boar. The undergrowth was too dense to be seen through, and he peered into it eagerly. He saw something move by the water-side and fired low.

There was a yell of human agony.

Hawthorne started back, fearing wild Indians.

When Lopez and the soldiers came up they reconnoitred cautiously.

They came upon a youngish man, plainly Guarani, who had fainted, but was more hurt than injured, for Hawthorne's bird-shot had merely peppered both his legs from ankle to mid-thigh, and the effort to run, combined with the pain, had been too much for him.

Hawthorne, with amazement, heard Lopez give the order in Guarani:

"Tie him up," and saw the wounded man pinioned.

"Why bind him?" he queried.

"Why," Lopez exulted. "He's a prize! A great prize! Señor Don Guillermo, you have the devil's luck, or the saints' protection. This is Galicien Abendano!"

(2)

At no great distance down the stream they came upon the prisoner's camp and ascertained that he had been hiding entirely alone, subsisting on fish and what little game he could snare or kill with his arrows. Convoying him to the *yerbateros'* quarters was a matter of some difficulty, as he could not walk, and could scarcely bear to be moved.

"You hobbled him thoroughly," the Lieutenant remarked. "No danger of his running away yet awhile."

When he was in a hut and safely under guard Lopez was much relieved. His attention was then pretty well occupied with the Carbonels. Pablo, his intuition confirmed by the discovery of Abendano's camp, so vaunted himself over his brother, that Pedro became a mere lunatic from chagrin and could with difficulty be restrained from knifing his tormentor. Hawthorne had never beheld such animal vindictiveness in any human being.

Lopez, his prisoner safe, devoted himself to the problem of transportation to Asuncion.

"There never was water in Paraguay," he said, "without Payaguá Indians not far off."

He rode over to the nearest reach of the Ypané-Guazu and almost at once came upon a camp of Payaguás. Paddled by these dexterous watermen, Hawthorne, Tolomeo,

Lopez, the prisoner and the soldiers sped rapidly down the Ypané-Guazu to its outfall into the Rio Paraguay and down the great river to the capital.

The morning after their arrival Bernardino Zapidas and the two brothers Abendano were shot before the sun was high.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## PRINCE BELTRAN

## (1)

**H**AWTHORNE'S first dinner in Asuncion after his expedition was a very fine dinner, as the Mayorgas were entertaining Don Fray Evaristo de Panés, Bishop of Asuncion, newly returned from a peregrination of much of his diocese. Chief of the guests assembled in his honour were Padre Hermengildo and Don Bernardo. The august Prior, courtly Intendente and venerable prelate made a notable trio. Fray Evaristo was much the same sort of man as Don Bernardo, had been much the same sort of man. For the infirmities impending over the ex-governor were already overwhelming the Bishop, who nodded automatically as he talked, whose lower lip sagged ever so little, and showed a trace of moisture where it drooped, whose knees barely served him.

He beamed on Hawthorne and said:

"My son, I have heard much praise of you, and not a little envy, for they speak of you as peculiarly gifted and astonishingly favoured by luck. They should say by Providence, for all happenings on this earth are determined not by haphazard chance, but by the merciful and beneficent ministrations of Divine Providence, which certainly favours you since you have been guided to Asuncion. I am told that your native land is a country of heretics and that you are yourself such. Be it known to you that at Asuncion, peculiarly among all places on earth, the grace of God is manifested in a very special manner. It may be that your coming here is due to the mysterious and inscrutable workings of Divine Providence, that you have been shepherded hither as a little child is led home out of the darkness of



night by his father's hand. It may be that by the operation of Divine benevolence hallowing the spiritual atmosphere of this favoured city, you may be weaned from your errors and brought into the fold of the lambs of God. Or, peradventure, according to the unfathomable dispensations of heaven, it may be the Divine will that you abide as you are, in which case be sure that, in some manner incomprehensible to us, all will indubitably be proceeding for the greater honour and glory of our Heavenly Father."

## (2)

That evening Hawthorne sat with Francia in the Palacio garden after their supper.

"To begin with," he said, "there is no place between Asuncion and the Ypané-Guazu at all suitable for a penal settlement."

"Definite and to the point," said Francia. "What next?"

"As to the quarries," Hawthorne continued, "Empeadrado has great quantities of excellent stone for building or paving. I believe the early Intendentes pitched on the best spot on all the river for quarrying. The ledges are close to the stream, the main current sweeps down that side, the water is deep enough for vessels to tie up directly to the bank. I do not believe you can improve on it."

"Good again," Francia ejaculated, taking a big pinch of snuff. "And what have you to say about *yerba*?"

"In the first place," Hawthorne replied, "I perceive that *maté* collected in the wild *yerbales* can never be packed otherwise than in raw-hide *tercios*. My notion that canvas would be better was based entirely upon the deterioration of the flavour in the customary packages. But raw-hide has overwhelming advantages compared with any other covering. It is the cheapest by far, it is water-tight, and soaking would impair the flavour of *yerba* far more than the taste raw-hide imparts to it. Most of all, in canvas or what not, *yerba* could never be packed as tight as it is by the powerful contraction of the raw-hide in drying. No other material possesses that invaluable quality."

"Yes," Francia reflected, "when you spoke of it I judged

that, except for some possible, but wholly fanciful future trade in *caa cuys*, you might as well talk of packing *yerba* in embroidered silk as in canvas at the price it commands here."

"Otherwise," Hawthorne resumed, "I find nothing absurd in my preconceptions. Everything else I imagined seems practicable."

"Excellent!" Francia exclaimed, snuffing again. "And what do you propose next?"

"I still hold to the idea of *yerba*-plantations," Hawthorne answered, "and I think I have a pretty good knowledge of the sort of country and kind of soil in which *yerba* thrives. It seems to me the favourable conditions are very much the same as for tobacco. I make a conjecture that *yerba*-plantations might be established on land which has been growing tobacco and begun to fall off in yield of that crop. It is possible that the time of year for working in *yerba*-plantations might turn out to be just when there is practically nothing to do to tobacco fields, might fall in between tobacco gathering and planting. So there is a possibility that the very force of workmen required for a tobacco plantation might keep up a *yerba*-plantation also without having too much labour put on them."

Francia cackled a dry laugh and rubbed his hands together.

"There may be nothing in all this," he said, "but it is a pleasure to hear you talk economy and imply profits. Even if you never mention proceeds, everything you say conjures up the picture of handsome net revenues over and above all expenses."

"In the hope of making that picture a reality," Hawthorne resumed, "I want a passport to travel about examining sites and soils."

"You shall have it," Francia agreed.

"And I have another idea," Hawthorne went on. "The curing of *yerba* is a slow, clumsy and haphazard process by the method in vogue. I am of the opinion that a broad, shallow, cast-iron pan, say a foot deep, ten feet wide and fifteen feet long, supported on two walls of brick-work or firestone of any sort, so that its top would be about three feet from the earth, leaving plenty of room for drafts and fuel underneath and low enough for all filling, stirring and

emptying to be done by men standing on the ground, would take the place of both *tatacuá* and *barbacuá* and would be superior to either."

"Pans three yards by five!" Francia cried. "How could you get them to the *yerbales*?"

"I was thinking," Hawthorne explained, "of working *yerba*-plantations when established."

"I see!" Francia commented. "But your imagination runs away with you. Cast-iron pans might be perfection, or solid gold pans. But one is as likely as the other. How obtain them?"

"I might make them," said Hawthorne simply.

"You talk as if iron-casting were easy," Francia objected.

"It depends on what one is casting," Hawthorne explained. "Pans for toasting *yerba* leaves would be thin and would be subjected to not much strain. Such articles can be cast readily as no uniformity of material or strength is required."

"I see!" Francia reflected meditatively.

"In conclusion," Hawthorne continued, "I propose to look for a locality where tobacco is grown, where land suitable for *yerba* is unused, where fuel is abundant, and where iron-ore is in sight. There we might consider beginning operations."

"Let us drink each other's health and to the success of your project," said Francia, "and then let us have a game of chess."

Over the chess board he remarked:

"Instead of having no games while you were away I have had many. Don Beltran plays as good a game as you. Not so solid a defense, but more vigour and unexpectedness in his attack. And a sort of personal vivacity that makes one enjoy even losing."

"You found him agreeable?" Hawthorne smiled.

"Agreeableness is but one of his qualities," the Dictator answered. "He is a man. I find one Paraguayan at last whom I can meet and treat as an equal. On which in act, manner, word and tone he has never presumed. He has tact, brains and sense. Likewise experience. He is competent." And he added: "Can you ride with me tomorrow afternoon?"

"Certainly," Hawthorne accepted.

"In that case," Francia promised, "I shall show you a real review. You shall see something worth while!

"Which reminds me," he continued, "that I have something else to show you."

He called Bopî, who went off and returned with a bolt of cotton cloth.

"Not bad homespun, eh?" Francia queried, running through his hands the four or five yards he had unrolled. "This is prison made and equal to the best German, far better than the slazy English weaves."

(3)

Hawthorne's first visit to the prison after his return from the *yerbales* was to him a very momentous occasion. Cecilia seemed really glad to see him. Her greeting was cordial, as between old friends, and her glance was personal, not the stony gaze with which she had stared past and beyond him during all their earlier interviews.

Always before he had stood at the entrance of her hut. This time he found there, besides her hide cot and spinning wheel, a low stool set by the door. After she had risen to greet him and reseated herself upon the cot, she indicated the stool by gesture and said:

"Sit down, Señor Don Guillermo."

This unexpected affability quite overwhelmed him and he was completely tongue-tied.

With astonishing results.

Always before he had had to do nearly all the talking. Cecilia's replies had been brief and the reverse of encouraging. She had never started a topic or volunteered a statement.

Now she remarked, quite as a matter of course:

"I hear with regret that you are no longer in favour with the Dictator."

"News to me!" Hawthorne replied, startled. "I supped with him last night. He seemed well pleased with my report of my expedition. We played chess and chatted until eleven o'clock, and I am to ride with him to the parade ground this afternoon."

Cecilia gazed full in his eyes, incredulously.

"I have been hearing daily, almost ever since your departure," she said, "and increasingly of late, that you have been completely supplanted in his regard by a Señor Jaray."

"Beltran!" Hawthorne exclaimed. "He is one of the best friends I have on earth. We met in Buenos Aires and came up the river on the same ship. I did everything I could to attract the Dictator's attention to him, and regretted that I succeeded so badly. I am rejoiced that they have become so well acquainted in my absence. I have barely seen Beltran since I returned, and had no chance to talk with him. But I am sure there is no thought of 'supplanting' in his head or mine. He and I are warm friends. I get on as well as ever with the Dictator, and the better he likes Beltran the better I am pleased. There is no jealousy between us."

Cecilia stared at him severely.

"Either," she said, "you mask your chagrin very successfully, and are gifted with a really terrifying faculty for dissimulation, or you are an appallingly unselfish and generous young man."

"I do not believe I am a bit like any of that." Hawthorne smiled.

Cecilia pouted at him.

"You are very stupid!" she told him. "I hoped you had lost favour, for I want to be friendly with you, and I can be friendly with no henchman of the tyrant."

And she would not talk any more.

But she had put in her hair some of the bright violet *timbo* and *leibo* flowers he had brought her, and the rest in her belt. They did not become her, he thought, as well as others of more brilliant hues which he had given her before; but they became her, and he carried the picture she made imprinted on his memory.

The talk she had heard of Beltran's intimacy with Francia had even penetrated the prison.

It was the one topic of conversation all over Asuncion. Hawthorne had been greeted with it at Mayorga's immediately after he had landed, and it had met him at every turn.

From the prison he went to Dr. Bargas' wine-shop, where

he found the usual group of cronies vehemently airing their views on the same subject.

"He is inscrutable to me," Don Jerman said. "Francisco and Angel seemed a pair of as competent young officers as a general could wish for. He dismissed them from the army on the ground that the presence of his nephews in any public service might lead to favouritism.

"I wonder what he means by favouritism?

"It certainly looks like favouritism, within two months after he met him, to appoint a young stranger, who had never held any rank in the army of our fatherland, to a command which puts him second only to himself and makes him superior to every officer in Asuncion."

"Colonel Jaray!" Don Sinforiano sneered. "And there were to be no more colonels! On that plea, I was retired. I, who won my colonelcy at Paraguay and Tacuari! I am nobody, and this upstart a Colonel!"

"Colonel, indeed!" Don Fulgencio snorted, puffing till he looked more like a bull-frog than ever. "He was to be the only Colonel! There were to be no Generals since Paraguay was to remain at peace, and Generals were a superfluity! On that pretext, I was retired along with Atanacio and Rogelio and Valeriano and my good Jerman here!

"And he now dubs himself General, he that never shot at anything bigger than a sparrow!

"And he gazettes as Colonel Don Joaquin Lopez, waist-deep in salt ooze in the marshes of Neembucú, and this fop, this coxcomb, this dandiprat!"

Riding from the Palacio that afternoon, Francia greatly surprised Hawthorne by letting his horse out into a canter. He appeared in an unusually good humour.

At the barracks the Dictator, Hawthorne beside him, took up a position near the middle at the west side of the drill-ground, the stables behind them. There they watched the infantry go through their manual of arms under Beltran's orders. Their appearance and behaviour were so altered since Hawthorne had last seen them that it was hard to believe they were the same body of troops. Francia had taught them to drill fairly well, but they had had the air of suspecting no reason why they should do what they did, of perceiving no utility in any posture they assumed or

movement they made, of going through the manual of arms merely because they were given the orders, much as they would have stood on their heads, or tried their best to do so, if El Supremo had so commanded. Now every company, every man, had the demeanour of feeling that what was going forward was a practical preparation for success in battle. Beltran had some wordless magic by which he made the very air about him tingle with the conviction that he gave no word of command which was not a positive aid towards winning a fight. Every man had an imaginary enemy in his mind's eye and the immediate hazard of victory or death looming in his imagination. A smarter body of troops Hawthorne had never seen, not even San Martin's.

For the inspection Francia did not dismount, merely rode his horse at a walk close in front of the ranks, drawn up two deep. He made no comments.

The inspection over, he took up his position as before, but much closer, bade Hawthorne remain by him, and called:

"Garmendia! Iturbe!"

When the Captain and Lieutenant stood before him, he said:

"Don Fulano, this *bríbon* disobeyed you yesterday; when you rebuked him he was insolent. Why did you not report his insubordination to Colonel Jaray or to me?"

"I thought," Garmendia replied, his eyes meeting Francia's boring glare full and steadily, "that I was perfectly competent to discipline him myself. I can quell his insolence and force his obedience."

Francia grunted.

"If you keep on that way," he said, "you'll be more than a Captain yet. That is the kind of man Paraguay needs."

Then he turned to the Lieutenant.

"Don Nilo," he said silkily, "you disobeyed your Captain. When he reprimanded you, you retorted that you did not have to obey him, that you were more of a favourite with me than he was. This is what I have heard, not from Don Fulano. Is it the fact?"

"It is true," Iturbe acknowledged.

"*Bríbonazo!*" Francia thundered. "I found you a beggar. I made you a soldier, an officer. I find you an insubordinate soldier and an insolent officer. You deserve

the *banquillo*. But before I order you shot. I shall try whether you are fit to live as a beggar. A beggar you shall be in an hour. If you are a meek and submissive beggar, a beggar you shall remain. If I ever hear of you again, die you shall."

He thereupon had fetched some worn, ragged and filthy garments, had Iturbe stripped of his uniform and clothed in these and a tattered poncho, formed two rows of cavalrymen with quirts in their hands, had the cashiered wretch forced to run the gauntlet of their whips and, cut and bleeding, chased away.

Riding off with Hawthorne to the knoll, he remarked:

"Inspection is a mere form since Don Beltran has taken charge. Not only they learnt at once that his eye is as quick and his animadversion as firm as mine, but he has been able to infuse into them a consciousness of what is wanted and a willingness to keep clean and orderly, a nicety I never could impress upon them."

Beltran's handling of the cavalry was as distinguished as his transformation of the infantry. Francia was manifestly delighted, for he took many huge pinches of snuff and cantered most of the way back to the Palacio.

(4)

Two days later, when Hawthorne went to the Government House to get his passports, he found in the forecourt the familiar curule chair standing empty by the littered table, on the other side of which sat Beltran in a smaller arm-chair.

"El Supremo," he said, "passed the night at the barracks. I do not know at what hour he will return to the city, probably he is already on his way. In the meantime he has delegated me to dispose of any urgent routine cases that may arise in his absence. Your papers are here, dated and signed by him, as you see. As far as they are concerned, you could set out to-day.

"But I advise you not to leave without seeing him again. Also, you had best ride out to Itapuá with me and spend the night. I expect to have leave over night. I want you to talk to Crisanto Yabi. I think you have never noticed him."



"I never have," Hawthorne answered. "Who is he?"

"One of the family retainers," Beltran replied, "and distinguished as three years older than grandmother. He was forty-nine when Bucareli expelled the Jesuits and had lived since boyhood on one of their *yerba*-plantations in Misiones. He knows all about their methods of selecting the wild seedlings for transplantation, setting them out, cultivating them, cutting branchlets and clipping bud-ends without injuring the bushes, raising plants from selected seed, propagating by cuttings, improvement by grafting and all the other lore of the Jesuit culture. I believe he is the only human being alive who knows anything of these matters; the sole repository of arts otherwise lost."

While they were discussing the aged Indian, Francia entered the court.

"Why," he said, "it makes no difference when you set out or how long you linger in Asuncion. Your passport is good until used, but you need not use it at once. Start when you please and ramble all you like. There is no other Galicien Abendano le Fort, self-styled Marquess of the Guaranies, at large. But I know of a few rascals in hiding whose calves would make a suitable target for your aim. Take your fowling-piece with you. You have taught me that bird-shot in the legs is often as effectual a quietus as a bullet through the brain."

"Any cases?" he asked Beltran.

"Only one I could not handle," Beltran replied; "an accusation of sorcery."

"From where?" Francia queried, leaning over the arm of his chair and rooting among the papers about the inkstand.

"From Curuguatay," Beltran replied.

"What is the accused like?" he asked.

"Good-looking young Guaraní woman," Beltran answered.

"Send for her," Francia ordered. "If there is a greater dolt in Paraguay than Padre Bonifacio Yeguaquí, it is just Comandante Pelayo Robles. Sorcery! Just like their asininity."

When the young woman was led in, Francia cried:

"Take those chains off her!"

While the order was being carried out, he snorted:

"A hundredweight of chains on a slip of a girl!"

When she faced him, he enquired:

"My dear, have you had breakfast?"

"Excellency," she replied, "the younger Excellency on the other side of the table gave orders that I should be fed. The *maté* was heavenly and the *chipá* very good. Also the oranges."

"Why that huge rosary round your neck?" the Dictator enquired.

"Padre Bonifacio hung it on me to exorcise the evil spirit," the girl said.

"Have you an evil spirit?" Francia queried.

"I know nothing of evil spirits," the girl protested, beginning to cry.

Francia put her through a long series of questions, at the end of which he said:

"You shall rest for two days at Itapuá with *Madrina* Juana, who understands everything. Then you shall return to Curuguatay under guard. Padre Yeguacá shall have your mother's house repaired and her garden kept planted and weeded for a year and shall give you a new *tupoi*. Don Pelayo shall give you ten *pesos* in silver. Go on curing women, men and beasts. Your art is not wizardry and you shall be honoured, not punished."

When she had been led away, he remarked:

"That is the kind of imbecility I have to contend with perpetually."

Just then Bopí shambled up.

"What?" Francia queried testily. "Oh, well, bring him in, bring him in."

Bopí returned with a mulatto servant-man notable for nothing except that he had two good eyes.

"What do you want?" Francia shot at him.

"Most Excellent Sir," said the mulatto, "I have to communicate important information."

"Important!" the Dictator exclaimed. "Do not presume, rascal! It is for me to judge whether it be important or unimportant. It is not for you to attempt to decide for me. It may not even be information. Let us hear it. Speak out!"

"Excellency!" the mulatto cringed, "it is for your Excellency's ears only!"

"*Bribonazo!*" Francia frowned. "You dictate to me how I shall receive what you make bold to call information and important? Tell this instant what you have come to tell, or I shall have you shot within an hour."

"Excellency, it concerns treason," the mulatto writhed.

"Whom do you accuse of treason?" Francia thundered.

"My master," stammered the miserable mulatto.

"Who is your master, *bribonazo?*" Francia roared at him.

"Don Cipriano Doméque," the wretch managed to utter.

Francia called the guard. Zorilla came.

Francia glared at him.

"Tell two of your men to hold this rascal!"

"Don Mateo," he added more mildly, "where is Don Aquiles?"

"Shall I call him?" Zorilla queried.

"Yes, fool!" Francia snapped.

When Ortellado came, Francia commanded:

"Seek Don Cipriano Doméque. Tell him that I request his presence here as promptly as possible concerning a trifling matter. Bring him with you. Be sure there is no appearance of arresting him, either to himself or others. Be quick."

Until Ortellado returned he chatted with Beltran and Hawthorne, who noticed in Beltran a sort of vanity, of self-assertion, of which he would not have believed him capable.

When Doméque had entered and the ceremonious greetings were over, Francia spoke.

"Señor Don Cipriano, this rascal servant of yours has thrust himself into my presence and intruded upon my time to volunteer against you an accusation of treason. I do not approve of servants tattling on their betters. A servant disloyal to his master is likely disloyal to me and to the republic, is probably a scoundrel in hopes of a cash reward.

"I propose to have this *bribon* given fifty lashes in the open market-square and confined six months in the public prison. I have sent for you to make sure that your views meet mine. Do you approve?"

Doméque, his knees knocking together with fright, his face mottled with bewilderment, signified his approval.

"*Bien*," said Francia. "*Retirese*."

Don Cipriano escaped.

Francia dismissed Ortellado also, called Zorilla, gave him the orders for the mulatto's flogging, and wearily signified that Hawthorne might remain or depart, as he preferred.

At Dr. Bargas' wine-shop Hawthorne again found Beltran's brevet rank and importance the main topic of conversation. As elsewhere, he heard there endless discussions on the subject. Beltran was dubbed "Prince Beltran" and by the more cultured and better-read old Spaniards was also alluded to as "Prince Eugène Beauharnais."

The Dictator's treatment of him was also argued over. Some held that it was an evidence of his diabolical astuteness, that he had found a tool suited to his hand; others hinted at dotage.

Don Bermudo said, whispering:

"His fate is upon him. Never has his flinty heart felt a throb of affection since it began to beat. This galliard has won his liking. He puts himself in his hands. We shall see his downfall. The Jarays were a fine family. Perhaps we shall be better off under a young despot."

Don Gregorio shook his head.

"Did you ever know him to make a mistake?" he queried. "This looks like weakness. It might be in another man. In him it is doubtless calculated. Put himself in another's power! Not he! Be assured he makes this parade of trust in another for some hidden reasons of his own. He is deep. He has all the strings of power in his own hands, as before."

Don Porfirio sneered.

"He has a purpose, not any purpose we can divine. If Don Beltran sits in the *patio* of the Government House as deputy and proxy, it is not because any real power is delegated to him, not because he is being trained for a successor to inherit Paraguay. It is because El Supremo has reasons of his own for being elsewhere. Or perhaps merely foresees the possibility of his wanting to be elsewhere at

some future date and is habituating Asuncion to his absence for a day or two at a time.

"Or perhaps he is laying a trap to catch his enemies, if they are fools enough to presume on his absence and try to rush a barrack and proclaim a revolution. If so, he has all his nets ready for the gulls that may light upon his bait. Beware!"

And Don Cipriano sighed:

"Beware indeed! I was never so terrified in my entire existence. If he ignores and declines information from a servant, it is most likely because he does not need it. I try to convince myself it might be a whim; his whims are countless. But I tremble. It is more probable that he knows all my acts and words. If so, however, why does he not order me shot? That man is unfathomable."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### TOBACCO AND IRON

#### (1)

HAWTHORNE began his explorations by travelling southwards in the direction of the reported iron-fields, keeping well to the eastwards of Lake Ypoa and the marsh-land about it. His first important stop was at Yaguaron. There he found Don Pedro Francia, a fat, easy-going old man, appearing full fifteen years the elder of his exalted brother. He seemed quite content to be mayor of an unpretentious village and superintendent of extensive plantations. He exhibited with pride his fields of tobacco, descanting with gusto on the virtues of the "*peti hoby*" variety, the seed of which his father had brought with him from Brazil. It was a novelty to Hawthorne, its leaves having so decidedly bluish a cast that in most conditions of sunlight the fields appeared not green, but expanses of deep blue leafage.

Don Pedro, in honour of his guest, had the curate and two of the aldermen of Yaguaron to dinner as well as three of the *hacendados* of the neighbourhood.

The next day the *Tapé* Indians had a sort of *fiesta*, the

main features of which were a bull-fight, a miracle play, and a *sortija*.

The *sortija*, which means merely "ring," was a game of tilting at a ring much like a Virginia tournament, only the horses were urged not merely to a canter but to a frenzied gallop, and the riders attempted to take the ring not with a lance, but with their sabres, swords or daggers, if they set up to be gentlemen, or on the point of a wooden poniard, if they were simple folk.

The miracle play, enacted on a small platform exposed to view on all sides, was rendered by some half dozen *Tapé* Indians, who astonished Hawthorne by entering into the spirit of their parts and acting creditably. The scenes they performed represented the coming to South America of the Apostle Thomas, bearing the actual cross upon which Christ had hung on Calvary, his conversion of the natives, his concealment of his precious relic in a grotto high up the slopes of Cerro de Santo Tomas, his death, the miraculous power of the cross to transport itself unaided to the help of the afflicted or distressed who worthily pray for its succour; the disappearance of disease or danger upon its arrival; its miraculous return to the holy cavern.

The "bull-fight" was notable chiefly for the tameness of the bulls and the timidity of the men. Its most exciting incident occurred when one Indian ran away too late or too slowly. The bull's horns caught his breeches and ripped them to tatters, whereupon the audience joyfully yelled:

"There go the rotten English velveteens!"

The neighbourhood of Yaguaron had plenty of worked-out tobacco-fields, but not a shoot of *yerba*. In fact, Hawthorne discovered at once that no *yerba-ilex* existed anywhere within reasonable walking distance of any Paraguayan town or farmstead. The labourers of the towns and peons on the *estancias* too poor to buy *maté* gathered it wherever it was reachable, so that not only trees, but bushes of it had been extirpated in all settled regions.

At Paraguay he went over both battle-fields and heard from residents the tale of the "terrible defeat" of January the eleventh and of the "glorious victory" of January the nineteenth, which had checked Belgrano's invasion.

From Paraguay he journeyed leisurely by way of Cara-

peguá, Tapaby and Quiyndy to Caapucú. There he inspected the by no means contemptible outcrop of iron ore.

Thence he turned northwards again to Ibicuy, where he found more indication of workable iron deposits, and some few *yerba* bushes, here and there in the undergrowth on Mount Tatacuá.

At Ibitimi he found another of the Dictator's brothers, Don Juan José Francia, a bluff, sunburned man with very curly black hair and a crispy jet-black beard, almost the only full beard Hawthorne had seen on any native of Paraguay. Don José was a prosperous *hacendado*, utterly absorbed in horse-breeding, at which he was an adept, and of which he talked incessantly.

His only other subject of conversation was his poncho, a really exquisite fabric of a delicate fawn-colour, with a texture soft as velvet. It was of the finest selected Peruvian *vicuña* wool. He boasted that it was more than two hundred years old and had been worn continuously, yet showed no sign of wear, being as durable as woven steel. It had been brought from Peru by a Don Salvador Isquibel, an ancestor of Beltran and Doña Juana, who had come to Asuncion in the retinue of Don Diego Martin Negromi. As that worthy had returned to Spain in 1615, the age of the poncho was considered established by the tradition as to its first owner. So priceless a garment had been passed on from father to son as a treasure until a Don Pamfilo Isquibel, its eighth possessor, had given it in token of friendship to Don Hermengildo Caballero, whose son Don Pantaleone, referred to by Don José as "Grandfather Caballero," had left the heirloom to the horse-breeder as his favourite grandson. He bragged that its colour never altered, whether wet or dry, and that no tempest ever beat through it, that it would turn the heaviest rainfall and keep its wearer dry even if he rode all day in the depth of the rainy season.

Don José talked without embarrassment of the great man of the family.

"Gaspar," he said, "is as good a judge of a horse as I am. He buys colts from here for his crack company of horse-guards, hussars he calls them. He never fails to pick just the very two-year-olds I had marked out as the flower of my herds. I have much respect for Gaspar."

From Ibitimi Hawthorne swung off to the east to Villa Rica and from there proceeded north-westwards by Ibaty, Valenzuela and Pirobebuy to Caacupé.

This entire excursion, from the time he reached Guarambaré, his first stopping-place out of Asuncion, had been a continuous ovation for Hawthorne. Every *estancia* gathered or killed its best for him and invited the most prominent neighbours to dine or sup in his honour. As he left each its owner, generally with a crony or two, accompanied him to the nearest *hacienda*, and often also on the next stage of his journey, so that he rode with five or six jovial companions, all magnificently horsed and each followed by his man-servant on mule-back.

At each village the Alcalde and the curate entertained him with rustic profusion, as had happened at Yaguaron. If they could persuade him to remain over the next day, they organised a *fiesta*, with its accompaniments of a *sortija*, a miracle play and a bull-fight to divert him.

Heralded everywhere as a special friend of the Dictator, his was a triumphal progress.

He noted the most striking differences between Asuncion and the rest of the country. In fact, everybody spoke of the capital simply as "*la Ciudad*"—"the city." If the burghers were old-fashioned and rococo, the yeomanry were primitive, almost archaic.

The costume in vogue in the city was at least fifty years behind the times, being the provincial version of the fashions of Paris under Louis XV, as copied in Madrid under Carlos III. In the country it was in modes antiquated by more than a century, those of the Grand Monarque's Versailles filtered through the court round Carlos II at the Escorial. The townsmen ran to stockings trig on the calf and breeches buckled snugly to the leg; the rustics universally sported breeches unfastened at the knee and permitting the openwork edging, frills and ruffles of their white cambric drawers to depend about their calves.

The more clownish of the *hacendados* and the bumpkins and yokels without exception wore over their furbelowed *caleconcillos*, not breeches, but that universal Gaucho garment a *chiripá*. A *chiripá* is a sort of blanket, often doubled and sometimes twice doubled, belted round the waist and reaching to the knees, like a kilt, but not worn



like a kilt. For when his belt was adjusted to his liking the wearer tucked the front of his *chiripá* between his legs, pulled the back of it forward and as far up in front as possible and fastened it with a big pin or clasp. The advantage of a *chiripá* is that a horseman wearing one is practically secure from chafing, no matter how long or how hard he rides.

At Pirobebuy, Hawthorne inspected the state sulphur mine and noted the kind of rock adjacent to the vein.

At Caacupé he found himself upon one of the *Velarde haciendas*, a vast extent of property under the charge of a really extraordinary *capataz* named Borda and addressed as Don Carlampio. He was that most unusual product, a garrulous and voluble Castilian. He had been a lieutenant in the army, an officer of coast-guards, a sea-captain, and a smuggler. He hated Spain and Spaniards with a furious hatred and fairly gnashed his teeth when he spoke of the "Goths." Across his face were two long sabre slashes, white and puckered, one from the left ear to the point of the chin all across his left cheek; the other across the forehead, the bridge of the nose, the right cheek and jaw. The lower just missed the left corner of his mouth, the upper almost bridged the interval from eye to eye. They changed colour as he talked: lead-grey when he was calm, blue when he became excited, enamel-white when he grew angry, and purple-brown at the end of a fit of laughter.

At the first opportunity, he managed to leave his other guests chatting and smoking under the brick-paved verandah while he led Hawthorne off to view the stables and corrals. Beneath a lean-to shed, well out of sight and hearing, he pointed to a small, flattish mound, and said:

"That is our old-time nitriary."

He emphasised the word "old."

Some thirty yards away, he bade Hawthorne look behind some ragged bushes.

Hawthorne could see nothing but some particularly loathsome weeds, about four posts supporting a rickety roof of thatch.

"You wouldn't suspect a nitriary there, would you?" Borda queried. "There is one there; the first I made after word was passed round. I've six more besides, all well hidden, and I've gathered half an *arroba* of good clean

saltpetre crystals already. It forms fast when you have part of an old nitriary to mix through a fresh-made heap.

"I did not merely split our nitriary; I mean to have a full dozen and all so hidden that no spy could ever find one. You'll never locate the rest unless I show you."

Hawthorne's face was perfectly blank.

"Señor Don Guillermo," Borda cried, "I am one of you!"

"One of whom?" Hawthorne asked tonelessly.

"One of the conspirators," Borda replied. "I am a member of your conspiracy."

"I know nothing of any conspiracy," Hawthorne replied. "I have no idea what you are talking of, Don Carlampio."

Borda produced two papers and handed them to Hawthorne.

The first read:

"Don Carlampio is one of us, and is aware of our plans."

It was signed by Don Eustaquio Baiz, Don Cipriano Doméque and Don Sinforiano Guerreros.

The second read:

"AMIGO DON GUILLERMO:

"Don Carlampio is our loyal adherent, and may be trusted. You may take the word of your admiring friend,

"MANUEL ATANACIO CABAÑAS."

Hawthorne gravely read both twice through, carefully.

Then he lit each at his cigar and watched it flare, puff and crumble.

"Writing," he said, "will ruin any man or body of men. Papers like these are too risky."

"They were given to me personally, Señor Don Guillermo," Borda explained, "and I would have defended them with my life. I had to have papers to make you believe me. You took me for a spy, as I foresaw. Time presses; I did not wish to waste any while you returned to Asuncion and journeyed back here. There is iron in abundance hereabouts. I have worked in forges in the Pyrenees when I was a smuggler. I have seen cannon cast and have some vague notion of the process. I have a beautiful outcrop of pure sulphur, totally unsuspected and perfectly concealed. We raise *peti-hoby* tobacco here, there are *yerba*-shrubs scattered about in the undergrowth in

the gorges of Costa de Acurrá. I brought back with me from Asuncion Crisanto Yabi, and he is full of reminiscences of the Jesuit plantations. Everything ought to go very smoothly. The Velardes are proverbially easy to bamboozle and hoodwink. Don Lupercio is more alert than any of them, but he can be gulled about casting cannon by casting huge pans for *yerba*-roasting, as you outlined to Don Eustaquio and the rest; he will be all interest in your proposed new methods. Yabi has no inkling of our true aim, of course, and his chatter will be a complete blind. We ought to get on well. Don Lupercio should be here to-morrow."

## (2)

The owner of the *estancia*, in fact, arrived early the next day. Hawthorne would have known him anywhere for a near relative of Ventura's. For Don Lupercio Velarde was a magnificent specimen of humanity. He was a tall man, slender but compactly built, and astonishingly muscular. His hair was very abundant, soft and fine, and, though every thread of it was silver-white, it did not make him look an old man, it rather accentuated the sense of physical vigour which diffused from his every attitude and movement, and it very much set off his hale, ruddy countenance and penetrating blue eyes. Besides looking amazingly young, he was positively handsome: his forehead broad and serene, his brows pencilled, his nose Grecian, his mouth small and beautifully curved, his chin round and firm.

He wore a large Peruvian straw hat, with a black velvet band; an upper garment which was a striking and effective compromise between poncho and *capote*; soft *vicuña* cloth, as for a poncho, dyed the deep crimson fashionable for *capotes*, and embroidered superbly with white corded silk; a Gaucho jacket of hunter's-green broadcloth, frogged with white braid, a white satin waistcoat, heavily embroidered with gold cord and edged with a row of small gold buttons almost touching each other, and a corresponding row of gold-worked buttonholes. His cravat was of patriot's-blue silk, very ample and Byronic; the collar and front of his fine cambric shirt were tamboured heavily and richly; his

waist was girt with a broad twisted sash of heavy lustrous crimson silk, above which showed the silver hilt of a huge knife in a morocco case, and the butts of two neat, silver-mounted pistols. He wore black velvet knee-breeches open at the knees, with more gold-worked buttonholes and more gold buttons, each being on tiny links of gold chain and manifestly never intended to touch the buttonholes.

From below the knee-breeches hung, according to the Gaucho fashion, the broad lace fringes and tamboured ruffles of his fine linen *caleconcillos*, depending to the calves of his legs, which were covered by brown stockings, not of silk but of beautiful silky Peruvian *vicuña* wool. His *potro* boots were soft and fine as a French kid glove and no French kid glove ever fitted a hand and wrist closer and more perfectly than Don Lupercio's fitted his feet and ankles. At his heels jingled brightly polished spurs; all of silver and their spiked rowels bigger than dollars. His small feet were supported by stirrups of solid silver, weighing at least five pounds apiece, slung to stirrup-leathers of braided leather, dyed red, white and blue; his high-peaked saddle was all deep grass-green velvet, edged with a broad, heavy rim of silver; as were the great, green-velvet holsters from which protruded the butts of two more pistols. These were as large as his belt-pistols were small, and their butts were all silver. So were the bosses on his reins and at every juncture of the straps on the head-piece of his bridle; the grip, guard and scabbard of his long horseman's-sabre; the massive, chased handle of the short whip called a *rebenque*, which hung from his wrist by a thong; the lid, chain and rings on the horn-tip housing the tinder, flint and steel, with which he continually lit his frequent cigarettes.

All of which fashions he had acquired during his eight years' partnership with Don Francisco Candiotti and had imported with him from Santa Fé on his return from his ten years' absence down the river with that prince of Gauchos.

Don Lupercio was princely himself, every fibre of him. "We Velardes," he said, "live by cattle and horses, of which we have more than any two families in Paraguay, and we prosper by them. Half the increase of our herds provides us with every luxury obtainable in this part of

the world. So we revel in all God's best gifts, and our wealth continually increases. We cultivate sugar, coffee, cotton and tobacco on our *estancias* for the greater glory and prosperity of the *patria*, for our country's benefit, not for any profit additional to our income from the cattle and horses, for we need none. If it be for the good of the *patria*, we shall cultivate *yerba*, too; or oranges, if you like; though why one should cultivate with labour what abounds wild in every direction, I do not understand. But you have my permission, even my countenance. Use any part of my land that suits you best; it is at your disposition; so are my peons to the last man. If nothing comes of it, no matter. If you achieve results, I shall benefit, as well as the *patria*.

"The *patria* cannot but profit by iron-smelting. Don Lazaro Ribera de Espinosa sent for experts from Catalonia and they worked in his time not only at Caapucú and Ibicuy, but also here and at Atirá. But they accomplished nothing worth while; a few spurs, a few spikes for ship-builders, some bad sabres; hardly more.

"Be it *yerba*, iron, or what not, be sure of my assistance and patronage. I am an enthusiastic patriot; you are the friend of our incomparable Dictator. Also, you are the friend of my beloved niece, therefore doubly my friend."

"How is Señorita Ventura?" Hawthorne enquired.

"In the best of health," Don Lupercio answered suavely.

"I mean to ride on to San Bernardino," Hawthorne said, "and visit your brother on my way to Atirá. I should like to see your niece again."

Don Lupercio at once became grave, even solemn.

"Ventura," he said, "would indubitably be overjoyed to receive you. My brother has always been the most hospitable of men. He would undoubtedly be most indignant, even wrathful with me, should he ever learn of my having discouraged a prospective visitor to his *estancia*. But I must do just that, and without explanation. Conditions at Don Toribio's home are such that it is best that you do not visit San Bernardino, nor let any rumour that you are so near them reach its residents. Move back and forth as you please from here to Atirá; Carlampio is head overseer of all my estates; of Atirá as of Caacupé. He will give you

every assistance. But do not turn aside to San Bernardino. A word to the wise, Señor Don Guillermo, is enough!"

## (3)

Crisanto Yabi was a full-blooded Indian, without a trace of European ancestry. But he was no Guarani, though he spoke Guarani and called himself a Guarani. He had been a foundling brought up by the Jesuits; but whether his parents had been Quirandis, Guaragos, Orejones, Tobas or Charruas could only be conjectured.

He was a hale and vigorous octogenarian still capable of prolonged exertion without fatigue; tall, with a great deal of lean muscle laid thinly over his big-jointed bones. As he had no teeth left, his countenance had that peculiar aspect of being wider than it was high, which results from the closing up of aged jaws. His face was a mass of criss-cross wrinkles, and in texture and colour was like rain-soaked and sun-dried leather.

It was easier to make him talk *yerba* than to get him to stop.

"Seed?" he said. "Oh, long time, long time seed. Hunt in woods. Find ferns, not any kind fern, right kind fern. Deep under tall tree. Close, no sun come through. Clear away all plant, all bush, leave only fern below, only tree above. Watch, maybe a year, maybe three year. Then pull up fern, root and all, spade and hoe much, all smooth. Plant *yerba* seed, maybe grow. Maybe not. If not, try other place. Slow, very slow.

"But transplant. Quick, very quick. Easy. Find young *yerba* shrub. Find plenty. Up mountain in gully. Clear away all weed. Hoe about roots. Watch. Take old field, plow, hoe, spade, get all ready. Come rainy time. Wait for moonlight. Go out at sunset. Wait. Sun set. Dig up *yerba* shrub, all roots, little roots, cut no roots. Tie in bundle. Carry to field. Plant in row, like maize. Next day, maybe rain. Good. Maybe no rain. Go round at night, pour water on plant. Good. Always at night. Good. Grow.

"Move *yerba* shrub by sunlight, always die; move by moonlight, mostly live. Easy."

Characteristically, Yabi would neither talk nor stop for Hawthorne, but would do either for Borda. For Borda likewise he worked with a vigour and pertinacity rare in an Indian of any race or age.

Oscillating between Caacupé and Atirá, Hawthorne spent a strenuous period in the company of the three. Don Lupercio merely looked resplendent, beamed indulgent patronage and smoked countless *cigarillos*.

Yabi hobbled up and down hillsides and identified hundreds of *yerba*-shrubs, appearing in the undergrowth of the forests much like stunted young laurel bushes, reminding Hawthorne of those he had seen in the ash and chestnut woodlands near Philadelphia. Also they were something like sassafras. As discovered, Yabi prepared the best for transplanting, fairly bristling with importance at finding himself in charge of a gang of peons.

Borda, it appeared, had happened upon his vein of sulphur not near Caacupé, but close to Atirá. There likewise he had many nitriaries. Charcoal burners he set to work on both estates, remarking that the small portion of charcoal they would use for gunpowder would never be missed out of the vast quantity they must consume in iron-smelting, which indeed turned out to be enormous in comparison with local habits of production and kitchen consumption.

Iron ore was more abundant at Caacupé, but there was near Atirá a comparatively small vein of most promising quality. On this Hawthorne commenced.

The moment he began giving directions for setting up a Catalan forge, Borda recognised the characteristics of the sort of iron-furnaces at which he had worked in the Pyrenees.

"But," he objected, "you can't make cast-iron in a furnace like that."

"Don Carlampio," Hawthorne said, "let us find out all the foolish blunders the peons can make over so simple a process as this before we hazard anything so difficult and ticklish as attempting to cast pig-iron from a closed oven."

In fact, for what seemed an endless procession of days, Hawthorne found himself involved in endeavouring to infuse into cheerful and willing but incredibly dull and stolid peons some inklings of the mysteries of stone bases, layers of charcoal brasque rammed down hard, fuyeres

and their proper inclination, bellows-making, the right proportions of ore above and charcoal below, the right slope for the charcoal behind and the ore in front, the moist mixing of a *greillado*, the spread of the *greillado* over the top and front of the heap of ore and charcoal, the judicious packing of this protecting coat, its maintenance during the firing, the withdrawal at just the right time of the resultant mass of spongy iron out of the liquid bath of melted silica, gangue and cinder. He stuck to it all doggedly till he could leave the trained peons at the empty furnace to pack it, fire it and draw it themselves unwatched and unguided, and be sure to find them triumphant over a good-sized mass of spongy iron, by a furnace in fair condition to be recharged and fired up again.

"What use do you mean to make of the first iron you forge?" Don Lupercio enquired, blowing a series of astonishingly perfect smoke-rings, as he lolled half out of his saddle, one knee crooked over the peak of it, his elbow on his horse's mane.

"I shall make some respectable tuyeres," Hawthorne said; "those wretched old gun-barrels we have been using are better than nothing, but not much. When we have tuyeres of the right size and taper, we shall do far better."

"And with the next?" Don Lupercio pressed him.

"As soon as I have enough iron," Hawthorne replied, "I shall make piping with it, construct a serpentine coil of it in the chimney of the furnace, connect one end with the bellows and the other with the tuyere, and pass the blast through it, thus heating the air before it reaches the fuel. Thus we shall make twice as much usable iron from the same weight of ore with barely half the charcoal we now consume."

When one band of peons had learnt their trade, Borda used them as foremen for the gangs of the five Catalan forges he soon had going near Atirá and of three more at Caacupé.

Then they attempted smelting ore for casting. This was a heart-breaking nightmare before they ran their first successful bed of sow and pigs.

The mere brick-making at the beginning proved dishearteningly unsatisfactory. And when they had a nine-foot closed blast-furnace built and charged, Hawthorne's igno-



rance as to the exact appearances which indicated the precise moment for tapping resulted in the waste of many charges. Twice he waited too long, and the iron cooled into a solid lump, to extract which the entire furnace had to be destroyed. Twice he tapped too soon and ran off a useless cascade of molten cinder. Slowly he recalled the half-learned lore of his half-forgotten apprenticeship; re-learned how to dam the tap-hole, with just the right mixture of clay and sand, relearned when to tap it; practically rediscovered for himself, so imperfectly had he observed it in his heedless boyhood, how and where to make the notch for the escape of the fluid cinder between tapplings; likewise discovered for himself how to adjust the level of the top of the dam to the tuyeres.

His first good pig he used to make tuyeres of cast iron, in place of the wrought-iron tuyeres he had perforce begun with, which melted off at the nozzles almost as if they had been wood and combustible.

After that his troubles were over. Borda learned how to tap a furnace the first time he watched Hawthorne do it. Teaching even the best peon was very slow, for they all feared the torrent of molten iron. But by cajolery and ridicule Borda managed to teach one. Then two more learned rapidly.

Hawthorne's face was then set for Asuncion.

"You think you can keep the work up alone?" he asked.

"Of a surety," Borda replied. "I understand all that is required of me: to dig more sulphur and select the clean, square-sided pieces; to add to our two and a half *arrobas* of saltpetre all I can safely gather and conceal; to put aside the choicest lengths of charcoal and keep them hidden; to produce as much malleable iron as I can, as openly as possible; to run off pigs in such a manner and at such times that I can secrete five-sixths of all I cast and yet make the one-sixth I show seem to account for all our ore, charcoal and labour. I can keep that up for a year."

"It may be more than a year before I come back," Hawthorne admonished him.

"I can keep it up for three years," Borda asserted.

## (4)

Hawthorne set out for Asuncion with a string of mules laden with bar-iron, strap-iron, wheel-tires, outlined horse-shoes, hammered stirrups, finished spurs, axle-rings, hub-rings, pole-straps, ship-spikes, builders'-nails, horse-shoe nails, harness-buckles, and other such forged articles.

The Dictator was naturally delighted, and asked questions in such a flood, so acute and so searching that Hawthorne needed all his alertness to keep the account of what had occurred as prepared and rehearsed by himself and Borda separate in his mind from what had actually happened.

Suddenly Francia changed the subject and queried:

"How long were you at San Bernardino?"

When Hawthorne told briefly why he had not gone there, he knit his brows and remarked:

"He used the word 'conditions.' That may mean anything, or nothing. The most natural conjecture would be that Don Toribio has lost his wits. I trust such is not the fact."

He gazed up at the stars overhead and remarked:

"Don Guillermo, nothing you have told me of your New England impresses me more than the smallpox hospitals of Rhode Island. The idea of every lad and lass of that state, between the ages of sixteen and twenty, bidding farewell to home and family and friends, journeying cheerfully to one or the other of the appointed places, there undergoing the preliminary dosing and the inoculation with that terrible disease, stoically enduring it, bearing up bravely in spite of others' deaths, meeting the end with fortitude if the malady prove fatal."

"When I left New England," Hawthorne said, "another method of preventing smallpox was being introduced and inoculation was becoming less universal. They were talking of repealing the laws making it compulsory."

"That has nothing to do with what I am thinking of," Francia said. "What strikes my imagination is the thought of the convalescents in their long reclining chairs on the porches, patiently gaining strength in enforced idleness chatting with each other. That nearly all the courtships

of the country should occur under such conditions has in it something tragic and pathetic. I think often of the weak and resolute brides and grooms, newly wedded after their incomplete recovery, setting out for their homes. What appeals to me is the idea of young people mating of their own accord and to please themselves instead of at the behest of their parents as generally with us.

"Marriage for mutual desire without considerations of wealth or family. That impresses me."

He stared hard at the candles on his table, threw away his cigar, lit a fresh cigar, and returned to the subject of iron.

"Why do you attempt casting only at Atir and not also at Caacup?"

"Red hematite ore," Hawthorne said, "I have found only near Atir. The brown hematite of Caacup, which is also plentiful near Atir, is better for smelting malleable iron. But I never heard of any one making cast-iron of brown hematite. I am sure I could not do so."

"How about the ores at Caapuc and Ibicuy?" the Dictator queried.

"All brown hematite there, all that I found," Hawthorne replied.

"Could you establish furnaces there also?" Francia enquired.

"Certainly," Hawthorne said; "any fool can learn to manage a Catalan bloomery. With two foremen at Atir I could have a forge going at Ibicuy and another at Caapuc within two months."

"Will you set about it at once?" Francia enquired. "I cannot think of any activity of yours more likely to benefit Paraguay in general and yourself and me in particular."

"I shall do so if you insist," Hawthorne rejoined, "but my thoughts are all set on *yerba*. What you called beating the bounds of Paraguay is now uppermost in my imagination. Iron, for me, is a means towards making roasting-pans for *yerba*-plantations; *yerba*-plantations are part of a scheme for increased *yerba*-export and for foreign trade. That scheme must be approached in one of two different ways. If we have to look forward to Brazilian competition, the plantations are all important, for we must aim at quality of export to hold our own against our possible

competitors. If there is no *yerba* or only inferior *yerba* in Brazil, we can let the idea of plantations remain a mere germ and maintain only one or two for experiment, relying wholly on gathering wild *yerba*. To know which method to follow I must beat the bounds of Paraguay, as you called it. Then we shall know whether you have an absolute world-monopoly of the product already in your grasp, or must create a virtual permanent monopoly by producing *yerba* of a quality with which Brazil could never hope to compete."

"Your experience at the *yerbales* of the Ypané Guazu has not daunted you?" Francia queried.

"Not a particle," Hawthorne answered.

"Remember," Francia spoke weightily, "the insects will be far worse, and no masks, gloves or leggings are likely to last you through it all. You came to Paraguay in June and were with the *yerbateros* through most of August, our coolest month. You found that hot. You will start, if you start now, at the beginning of summer, and be away two summers. The heat will be truly terrific, and you will feel the worst of it."

"Heat will not scare me," Hawthorne said, "nor insects nor Indians, nor any risk or danger. I am resolute about going, and shall begin to prepare myself at once if you give permission."

Francia reflected.

"If you are so determined," he said, "I shall not oppose you. I shall assign Lopez to accompany you and be responsible for your safety. Six soldiers will be sufficient to ensure you against being massacred by skulking savages; more would be difficult if not impossible to feed. I'll pick out soldiers who can shoot straight.

"I do not want to discourage you, and I shall not argue with you. But the matter is of such moment, the chances of your survival are so small, that you should at least have forty-eight hours to make up your mind and think it over. Sup with me again day after to-morrow. If your purpose is unalterable, I shall then give you all the assistance in my power."

"I shall not flinch," Hawthorne declared.

"At least," Francia said, "take the time I have indicated, and now, let us have our game of chess."

## CHAPTER XXX

## THE REVOLUTIONISTS

## (1)

ON visiting the prison, Hawthorne found Cecilia resigned and serene, apparently in perfect health, and embroidering as if she had no concern or interest besides.

At Dr. Bargas' wine-shop he learned that the conspiracy had been widely extended, including now practically every native of Spain in Paraguay except Doña Juana Isquibel. But he also heard that murmurs against himself, his plans as declared to the conspirators, his activities as they learned of them from others, were heard generally among the new recruits who had never seen him and even among some of the original members. Also bickerings had arisen among the leaders and expressions of jealousy among those who were not the leaders.

It was plain that a meeting of the conspirators must be held.

"I shall need," Hawthorne said to Cabañas, "at least six days to prepare for my long journey. It may turn out that even two weeks will prove too short a time. We can easily arrange for a full meeting here some warm afternoon without appearances being in the least suspicious. If it cannot be arranged, I can invent some pretexts for delay until the meeting has taken place."

He discovered at once that no pretexts need be invented. The preparations for his expedition could not be despatched rapidly.

## (2)

On the momentous afternoon appointed for the general meeting of the conspirators Hawthorne found himself much disquieted by the throng assembled at Dr. Bargas' wine-shop. At the first opportunity he said:

"I think we are exposing ourselves unnecessarily and to the most frightful danger. It seems to me that such a crowd as we are can to no one appear an accidental gathering of customers and idlers."

"The danger," Dr. Bargas retorted, "should be no greater than on at least four days each week throughout the past month or two. The popularity of my wine increases faster than our members. This is no unusual crowd for my premises. But we have provided against suspicion by arranging for a constant stream of arrivals by ones and twos and departures by ones, twos and threes, at carefully calculated, irregular intervals, all the afternoon."

"That sounds rational and ingenious," Hawthorne said; "but still this assemblage seems to me too large for safety. I think we should conclude our discussions as promptly as possible and unostentatiously disperse."

"Before your discussions are begun," spoke a voice, "I ask to be heard."

The assembly found itself gazing at Don Lampadio Casal of Limpio.

"Señor Don Lampadio," Cabañas addressed him. "We listen."

"Don Guillermo," Casal said, "has called attention to the dangers to which you expose yourselves. I desire to point out another. You are enticing to join your organisation men not at all in sympathy with your aims. Myself am such an one. You all know me too well to fear betrayal from me. I shall not warn our Dictator of his danger from you, if you are a danger to him. I shall be mute and give no sign by word or otherwise. But I should never have been thought of as a possible conspirator, should never have been approached, far less lured into membership and accepted as a member. I am not entirely satisfied with Don Gaspar's rule in Paraguay, but what government ever entirely satisfied all citizens? I am well content.

"We had the amazing luck to win our independence of Spain and of Buenos Aires in one brief campaign in which we put in the field some five thousand men altogether against fewer than a thousand invaders. Our adversaries were overcome by their own rashness, succumbing to the mere pressure of numbers all about them, without serious fighting. There fell of them but eleven men killed and twelve wounded, of whom six died. Thirteen more met death by disease. Barely thirty of the vanquished perished in hostilities lasting four months. On our side there fell about ninety killed and two hundred wounded. The deaths

totalled just one hundred and eighty-six. At the price of the blood of no more than two hundred and sixteen men we have wrung an acknowledgement of our independence from the government of Buenos Aires. As the ships and troops of Spain can never again reach us, because they can never subdue the Porteños, we are free forever of outside coercion. Spain will acknowledge our independence in due course and the rest of the world following her. We are no longer troubled by external influences.

"Our internal troubles have been trifling, thanks to Doctor Don José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, against whom you plot. You call him tyrant, despot, oppressor; you call him bloody-minded and inflexible. Yet it is only eleven years since Don Lazaro de Ribera died. Have you forgotten him so soon? Our present Dictator has been Supreme officially for two years, actually for longer than three, more or less in power for five years. In five years complete, including those who fell in the three hours' fighting on the famous Twenty-ninth of September in the attempted Counter-Revolution, there have perished in Paraguay by bullet and sabre at the commands of the government not quite a hundred persons. I do not reckon in this enumeration ordinary criminals. I am speaking of retribution for political activities.

"Don Lazaro was Intendente nine years, and once had two hundred and sixty men shot in one day. Few months passed but he ordered more executions than our oppressor, as you call him, has authorised in five years.

"Don Bernardo, here present, had but four men put to death during his five years governorship. But he was an exception. As compared with what she was under most Intendentes, under her Dictator Paraguay is infinitely better off.

"Infinitely better off than any other part of Spanish America is Paraguay under her present government. You all know the horrors Artigas keeps up throughout the Banda Oriental and Entre Rios. They have been a mild sample of what is going on from Goajira to Valdivia. Everywhere for six years now mobs, riots, insurrections, revolts, assassinations, executions, battles, sieges, devastations, and massacres have been desolating and ravaging the wretched provinces. Implacable ferocity has been the order

of the day. For instance, at La Guaira, not three years ago, Don Simon Bolivar perpetrated the wholesale massacre of eight hundred and sixty-six helpless prisoners, merely because they were Spaniards. In a day he spilt, for mere malignancy, more than four times the blood poured out in our entire war of liberation.

"Compare Doctor Francia with the ideal ruler and you may think up a long list of defects and short-comings. Compare him with our past Intendentes and present-day rulers of other parts of the continent and he shows more than favourably; he cuts a distinguished figure. Through a period throughout which all the rest of Spanish America has been an inferno of privation, destitution, devastation, mourning and death, Paraguay has been kept by his astuteness and foresight from external interference and internal disturbance. I am for him and so are most men like me. So small a minority as you are can accomplish nothing. I have now given you warning and depart."

He stood up.

"Señor Don Lampadio," spoke Dr. Bargas, "you must be thirsty. Let me offer you a tankard of wine before you go."

Casal accepted and a general circulation of tankards followed.

When it was over Cabañas enquired:

"Would any one else like to depart with Don Lampadio? Have we here another new member who joined us under a misapprehension?"

No one stirred or spoke.

"*Vaya Usted con Dios, Hermano!*" Dr. Bargas said to Casal.

When he was gone Cabañas resumed:

"Don Guillermo advises despatch. Don Lampadio's prolixity has not conduced to speed. I need make no comment on his utterances, as he expresses what we all know are the general opinions of most Creoles. Does any one wish to remark on what he said?"

No one spoke.

"Then," said Cabañas, in a very embarrassed manner, "I have to announce that our most important business and my most pressing duty is to communicate to you, Señor Don Guillermo, that you have been subjected to much



cavilling in the informal gatherings which knots of us have formed from time to time and that at larger meetings you have been even fiercely assailed and vehemently accused. It would cement our organisation were you to confute the charges."

"Willingly," Hawthorne replied. "Let me hear the charges. Where are my assailants and accusers?"

"Those who carp against you," Cabañas rejoined, "have uniformly spoken only after a pledge that their identity should be kept from you and they all decline to face you."

"That," Hawthorne smiled, "seems to me a sufficient confutation of anything they may have said."

"It should be," Cabañas assented, "but I foresee that our conspiracy will infallibly suffer betrayal, fall to pieces by internal dissensions or become impotent unless the charges are answered by yourself, Señor Don Guillermo, in person. Don Eustaquio, Don Hilarion, Don Cipriano, Don Valeriano and I myself have replied to them with arguments which should have convinced any one, but which manifestly had no effect. I ask you, Señor Don Guillermo, as a favour to myself, to permit me to state their insinuations against you and to reply to the meeting at large."

"A request from you, Señor Don Atanacio," Hawthorne rejoined, "no one could well refuse. I await your abstract of these mutterings and am prepared to refute them."

"In the first place," Cabañas began, "I will come at once to strictures based on appearances very much against you, the misinterpretation of which has disturbed all of us.

"Your vilifiers point out that you led us to form this conspiracy most of all by an eloquent expression of your conviction that the troops of the Dictator could not resist in the field a resolute body of patriots. I cannot recollect your words, nor can any one, but you somehow conveyed to us your belief and made us tingle with that same belief, that we would be a body of gentlemen skilled in the use of arms and on fire with indignation and faith in the righteousness of our cause, facing a mob of louts, clumsy with their guns, without practice or coherence, utterly devoid of genuine loyalty for their leader.

"The more we think this over the less true it seems to have been even the day you arrived at Asuncion, and the further it appears from the fact as each day passes.

"The national troops appear formidable, and are becoming more so. And the point your traducers insist on is that you represented them as likely to prove easy to overcome, when you had yourself brought from Buenos Aires a drill-master to make them efficient; that you inveigled us into forming this organisation by arguing that the army was a mere show while at the same time putting into the tyrant's hands the means to make it invincible."

"Invincible!" Hawthorne cried. "Nothing is invincible, except heroes determined to conquer. I have fought shoulder to shoulder with heroes. I was one of the four hundred who followed Bolivar over the sierra from Ocano to the relief of Pamplona. We were caught in a storm in the mountains, lost more than half our horses, all our provisions, and came down into the foothills a famished and exhausted band of scarecrows, in rags, and with most of our powder wet. We met five times our number of well-fed, well-equipped, unwearied royalists, as brave men as ever came out of Spain. But we beat them. So will you beat the hirelings of the Dictator if you are firm and resolute. If you are determined to win you must win. Only if you anticipate failure will you fail. The despot's troops can be made invincible against you only by your thinking them so. And you will not think them so."

"Come. I comprehend the feelings of those whose utterances Don Atanacio has voiced. They adhered to our conspiracy anticipating an insurrection against forces recruited by conscription, not a volunteer among them, and kept to their duties and discipline by martinet methods. They see a sort of unexpected vigour infused into these troops by Don Beltran. They expected to find opposed to them soldiers who had entered the army under compulsion and had no better drill than the best that could be given them by a scholar who had never been in a battle, a skirmish, or even so much as a camp of war. They naturally shrink at the idea of facing troops drilled by a young warrior who fought against Soult and Massena. They realise they must be more formidable already, and steadily becoming more so."

"Let us figure them as formidable as possible, as perfectly drilled as if Don Beltran were a Murat, a Berthier

or a Davoust, every man loyal and staunch, what would they be at that?

"You know how they are enlisted. When the order goes out to the *comandantes*, each assembles all the unmarried young men of his district, the visiting inspector looks them over, those of really good families he dismisses as a matter of custom, without question. The sons of the poorer *hacendados* and richer *chacareros* buy themselves off, cash down. Relations of the curates or *comandantes* are let go from favouritism. The remainder are compelled to enter the army, driven to Asuncion like bullocks and herded here under penalty of death if they desert. Not one in ten has any liking for barrack-life; fewer put any heart into their drill and practice-evolutions. Loyalty to the Dictator is enforced by severe punishments for any utterance impugning him. But it is all a sham. Not one in a hundred really likes his master. They fear him and obey him, but they do not love him. What wonder if they are delighted to be drilled by a handsome young cavalier who has a breezy manner, a pleasant word for every one, and a way of making reviews and even the manual of arms appear a sort of game, to be played with zest? They have no more active and vivid loyalty for Don Beltran than they have for Francia. They are held together by fear, not by enthusiasm. As in peace so will it be if they are called on to fight. However perfectly drilled they may be, they will be men with no common aims, no stirring motive for cohesion. You will be men fused into a living thunderbolt by consciousness of the wrongs you have suffered, by realisation of all you have at stake. Once let an inkling reach them that you may succeed and they'd rather come over to your side and help abase their despot than aid him against you. They have nothing to fight for. Whatever happens, whoever is in authority, the same barrack-life and barrack-fare for them. A change of masters might be an agreeable novelty. Put yourselves in imagination against such corralled cattle; you Spanish gentlemen on fire for the cause of your God, saints and religion in addition to your homes, families and lives. Can you doubt but that you must win?"

"Ah!" sighed Padre Melquiades Cabellero, "you have a tongue. You almost make me wish I were a soldier; it all seems so easy, so certain!"

"All very fine," broke in Gamarra, "but Don Guillermo has not said one word on the main point."

"What is that, Señor Don Rogelio?" Hawthorne queried.

It was Guerreros who answered.

"You have not explained at all, Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "your having yourself brought to Asuncion the man whom the Dictator is employing to improve his forces."

"Oh!" cried Hawthorne. "An adversary at last and in the open. Good! Señor Don Sinforiano, the insinuation is absurd. Beltran left Spain with the definite intention of returning to his home, as was most natural. We met by accident in Buenos Aires. I had returned there from Cuyo, unwilling to continue with General San Martin because of his merciless executions of many Spaniards, as I had two years before left General Bolivar because of his massacre of the prisoners in La Guaira, to which Don Lampadio referred a while ago. I had resolved to come to Paraguay before I encountered Beltran, as he had before knowing me. Neither had any influence on the other's coming. It was a chance that we were on the same ship. Any suspicion of me on that account is moonshine. Beltran would be in Asuncion now if I had never come.

"As to Francia's employing him for drill-master and making him a Colonel, I had nothing to do with that either, except that I had a natural friendship with Beltran and wanted the Dictator to like him and him to prosper in his home-country under its new government. I did not foresee the awkward situation I am put in. I like Beltran. I hate the idea of his being in the service of a government I am plotting to overthrow. I more than like him; I love him, and I shrink from the thought of facing him in battle or of causing his death in war. But it seems to me that when a man has marked out for himself a course of action according to his conception of his duty he ought not to hesitate over the consequences of small blunders he has made by the way nor swerve because of possible or probable harm to individuals he loves.

"As far as I am concerned I hold to my purposes as if Beltran had never existed. His efficiency as a drill-master, his personal charm for the men he commands, do not daunt

me a particle. Suppose he has made them ten times as good soldiers and a hundred times as loyal as they were. Suppose him likely to prove an inspired leader in the field. I shall join you in raising the standard of revolt as confidently as if he were not to be with the government forces. Suppose him certain to fall in battle, even by my hand. I shall not flinch. No such considerations can dishearten or deter me.

"But unless you this instant and unanimously declare your confidence in me and your complete and final rejection of all these nursery bogey-tales and all they imply, I leave you here and now and henceforth devote myself not to revolutionising, but to mere commercial *yerba*-culture and iron-smelting. I must hear from you instantly, gentlemen, and unequivocally, if I am to continue your confederate."

When he paused there was a general outburst of expressions of confidence and admiration in which even Gamarra joined. It was a rousing ovation that would have satisfied a colder-blooded man than Hawthorne. When the resultant enthusiasm had somewhat quieted, Cabañas addressed the meeting:

"Gentlemen, I do not believe Don Beltran or any man could inspire in his troops the zeal Don Guillermo arouses in us. After what he has said, what you have heard, it would be childish and will be unnecessary to recur to the doubts which have arisen on account of his intimacy with the Dictator, his many evenings in his company, the public favours he has received. We see in all these the natural workings of Don Guillermo's plans. He has done so far only what he proposed to do. All doubts on these or other points have now vanished."

Which speech was met with general applause and approval.

The noise was hushed by Parlett from outside whistling his warning. To a gathering of detached idlers, chatting and sipping, there entered two Payaguá Indians, asking for Don Cipriano Doméque. From him each wanted a *peso* of silver in exchange for a bodkin-shaped labret offered as a pledge.

Gravely he handed them the coins, gravely they handed him their wives' ornaments, gravely they departed, their

odour lingering throughout the wine-shop after they were gone.

Don Cipriano explained.

"They are always running to me for cash when they need it, generally for fines when one of the tribe is arrested. They always return and redeem their pledges, after however long an interval. I have acted as their banker now for some years, in fact ever since Domingo left Asuncion for Buenos Aires. Always before that he acted as tribal adviser, pawnbroker and banker for the whole clan of them. It is inconvenient, being interrupted this way, but no one can put off or deny a Payaguá client. They must have their way and at once."

After the Payaguás were gone Cabañas again spoke and to Hawthorne.

"Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "your directness and sincerity have abolished in any who may have partially entertained them any traces of doubts of your character and intentions. Forgive me if I have a doubt, not as to your purpose, but on a subtler point. May I express it and have the pleasure of hearing you annihilate it?"

"Certainly," said Hawthorne. "An expression of a doubt from you, Señor Don Atanacio, is a compliment in view of your faith in me in general."

"My doubt is this," Cabañas very slowly uttered. "The man is a wizard, a great ruler and swayer of men. You have been much and familiarly in his company. Now, although you design to overthrow his despotism, though all your associations with him have been planned for that end, are you not perhaps, perhaps unconsciously, falling under the spell of his personality? Are you not, without realising it, coming to think of his government as do Don Lampadio and his kind, and coming to feel for the man himself, without your suspecting it, a genuine admiration and an increasing friendliness? Have you not grown to esteem him, to like him, almost to love him? Does not this blur and will not this blunt your conscientious hostility?"

"Very subtly put, Señor Don Atanacio," Hawthorne rejoined, "and not by any means wide of the mark. You are right and you are wrong. I have come to revere him as a man and enjoy him as a companion. He is wonderful, and is very good company and very likable. He is a most

competent ruler were it not for his capricious harshness.

"I can answer your *olla* of questions better informally than formally.

"First of all, I can answer one or two and with them some of Don Lampadio's utterances. No government, in my opinion, is so good that one must give up all idea of abolishing it, if necessary, and of establishing in its place a better, if advisable. I hold that no man, however competent, should rule a people without regard for all classes of citizens. He ignores all claims of all old Spaniards and treats them all alike as having no rights. His general competence cannot excuse this in my eyes. He means to deal out even justice to all alike, whereas in effect he not only uniformly disfavours the old Spaniards, but acts on whim and impulse rather than by system. I am not shaken in my belief that we should, and in my faith that we can, replace his tyranny by the rule of law and equity.

"As to his individuality I confess that I regret the necessity of abasing him, perhaps exiling him, possibly causing his death in battle. But as I said of my love for Beltran, I think all such feelings should be remorselessly set aside for higher considerations. Personal dislikes or likes, hate or love should not have play at all where the welfare of a whole nation is at stake."

Cabañas bowed.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I take it that Don Guillermo is our confederate and we his, heart and soul."

When the expressions of approval had abated Hawthorne spoke.

"Have we other business?" he asked. "If not, we should now disperse."

"Before we disperse," Don Larios Galvan said, "it seems to me we should formally express our approval of Don Guillermo's plans and pledge ourselves to support our chosen leaders. At least, that is how it seems to me as a lawyer, looking forward to Don Guillermo's proposed long and uncertain period of absence and the probable necessity for prompt action on his return."

"At this point," spoke Don Mauricio Zelaya, "I wish to make myself heard."

When all had faced him, he continued:

"I am a man of commerce; not a man of war. Perhaps I

miss the verity. But for the life of me I cannot perceive the sense of choosing Atir as the place to rally and raise the standard of revolt. It has iron and other materials; it has rich *estancias* about it and countless horses and cattle. But beyond that district there are only the forests and *yerbales* about Curuguatay, Forquilha and Voquita; only the wildernesses of the Brazilian frontier. There is nowhere to retreat to if we are temporarily worsted; no escape if we are finally beaten; no possibility of increasing our following from behind us or of renewing our equipment at need. We place all Paraguay between us and the rest of the world and pen ourselves up between the tyrant's forces and the Brazilian wilds.

"Why not rally at Neembuc? There we should have the river open to us and access to Corrientes easy if we were defeated. Also supplies and munitions could come to us by water. Perrichon, Artigas and Candiotti hate the despot so fiercely that they would send us men even, and permit not only stores and clothing but also sabres, powder, guns and cannon, which they sedulously blockade now, to reach us in the hope of our succeeding; they would assist us to the extent of their ability. Why not pitch on Neembuc instead of Atir?"

"Don Joaquin Lopez," Zevallos cut in, "is a 'why not' very large indeed."

"Joaquin," said Yegros, "must be disaffected. Everybody knows Francia was jealous of him and sent him away on that account. He must know it. And anyhow, no one could help being displeased at having to exchange Asuncion for Neembuc."

"I think," Guerreros added, "that I could persuade Joaquin to join us."

"How?" queried Don Hilarion Decoud. "If you asked for a passport to Neembuc you'd be clapped in the *cuartel*. If you wrote to him, your letters would be intercepted; if you set out without a passport you'd be arrested; in either case you'd be shot."

"And suppose you could reach him, Sinforiano," Cabañas mildly added, "if you fail to convince him you betray us all; if you succeed you have merely transferred to Neembuc, where it is of infinitely less effect, your favourite plan of tampering with troops and seizing a barrack. If



we were determined to try that, we'd try it nearer home; and we are determined not to try it at all. Mallada was example enough."

"Nor," said Caballero, "could you wheedle Joaquin. He has a streak of rough simplicity in him and would likely prove blunt and loyal."

"Anyhow," Somellera declared, "suppose him on our side and all of us at Neembucú; we could accomplish nothing except by creating a fleet, coming up the river and landing somewhere above Angostura. Law is my vocation, not soldiering. But I perceive the military qualities of the country about Neembucú, and all the better since I had never heard, read or dreamt of such conditions. I came here almost direct from Spain, young and enthusiastic, elated at being appointed secretary to an Intendente. Journeying from Buenos Aires to Corrientes on horseback, in the saddle each day from sunrise to sunset, with the briefest possible pauses while changing mounts at the post-houses, with no interrupting except canoeing across the river from Santa Fé to the Bajada, I completed the two hundred and seventy-three leagues in eleven days. To me it was all one glorious gallop. The weather had been superb; clear, breezy, and not very hot. I was exhilarated, unwearied and on fire to reach Asuncion. I barely paused at Corrientes, crossed the Paraná at Paso del Rey, and reached Ycaré. From there I had the choice of two routes. I was urged to travel by San Miguel, Caapucú, Topabi and Carapeguá on the plea that although the circuit amounted to one hundred and thirty leagues, the roads were good. But, when I heard that the alternative route by Herradura, Sangita and Palmas was more direct and measured but eighty-five leagues, I refused to listen to warnings about marshes, swamps and inundations, and thought only of saving forty-five leagues. Boy-like, I chose the shorter route. I acquired then some experiences at crossing pools, ponds, rivulets, streams, rivers and lakes; sometimes four each league all day long. I learnt the provincial meaning of the word *pelota* when my man-servant showed me how he took a bull-hide, gathered up and fastened the corners, placed all my effects in it, and me crouching among them, the water lapping a finger-breadth below the edges all round, while he swam the obstacle, rope in teeth, towing me and my goods

in the *pelota*, I quaking all the way lest the bridles of our horses swimming behind should tighten too much from my hand against the rim of the *pelota* and swamp the whole crazy contrivance. It was that over and over all day long all the way from Neembucú through Herradura to Palmas.

"From that I know the military possibilities of that neighbourhood. Once in possession of Neembucú we could certainly hold it, but we could never hope to advance beyond whatever point in the marsh-country might happen to be the despot's nearest strong outpost after he put his troops in motion towards us. It would be a deadlock in which time would help him and harm us. We should certainly lose in the end."

"You are as right as if you had been bred in camps," Caballero said. "If the idea were to seize a defensible point and hold it until the tyrant dies of old age Neembucú would be ideal. But Don Guillermo's plan, if I comprehend it rightly, certainly as we military men of this organisation have worked it out, contemplates a steady, even a rapid advance on the city. We could not advance at all from Neembucú farther than wherever the two armies came into touch. There we'd stick forever. Any small force could hold any position in the marsh country against odds even incredible. There are two or three places on the river-bank between Curupaiti and Neembucú, any one of which a thousand resolute men with provisions and a few cannon could hold against a hundred times their numbers for two years. Humaitá for instance. There are such places all through the marsh-country. We cannot consider Neembucú."

Then Don Bernardo spoke impressively:

"Nor could we consider Don Joaquin. He is a forceful and able man. As our ally he would soon make himself our leader, and if successful we should be making him Dictator instead of Francia. In place of a despot learned, wise and well-meaning we should have one ignorant and self-indulgent. You all know the Lopez temperament, the Lopez character. The whole family is alike; Don Joaquin is perhaps the most decent of the clan; but imagine him Dictator. What household would feel safe? We can say much against our terrible doctor, but no family in Paraguay mourns for any one of its women because of him; he

banks and on the broken country between them, with tangled, impenetrable, thorny forests, possibly harbouring remnants of the Tobas or of their man-eating kindred. The Jesuits in 1632, in their flight from upper Loreto and Upper Sant Ignacio in Guayrá, lost a full third of their twelve thousand Christianised Indians in their passage through the obstacles along the east bank.

"It is impossible for your Payaguás to accompany you through the parched savannas of Guayrá, beyond the eastern limit of the broken country and river-gorges. A Payaguá cannot learn to ride a horse, except for short distances at slow paces; and, while a Payaguá can run by a horse all day and never tire, and repeat it day after day, he must have plenty of water.

"Therefore, the attempt at passing down either bank being equally impracticable for all, the wide circuit through Guayrá impossible for them, the running of the rapids too rash for you, you must separate from your Payaguás above the Salto Grande and leave them to shift for themselves. You need not worry about them. If some should be killed by the Tobas, perish of exposure, or drown, who would care? Payaguás are plentiful, and too plentiful. But the chances of their losing even one of their number are small. A Payaguá has a wholesome dread of Guaycarús, is wary and practically amphibious. There are no better swimmers on earth, and a Payaguá can sleep naked on a spray-drenched rock and wake supple and lively, thrives on raw fish, and would regard a week or two of battling with cataracts, all unremitting toil and incessant sousings, as a pleasant diversion. You'll find all your Payaguás fat, sleek and without notable bruises, with all their canoes, or new ones to make up the tale of *balsas*, comfortably encamped at the confluence of the Curitibá with the Paraná. You may dismiss them from your mind altogether and feel no concern.

"For yourselves, Lopez ought for that part of the expedition to be a most competent reliance. He understands all the devices by which men and horses can be kept fit in any sort of country. And you are likely to find many difficulties, only less insuperable than those of the gorge or its vicinity. As the gorge is thirty-three leagues of cataracts and rapids and as you must make a wide cast to leave

well on your right the minor gorges of the countless little tributaries, you will have to ride a full hundred leagues."

"Three hundred miles!" Hawthorne meditated.

"Three hundred of your miles," Francia confirmed him, "and I cannot prophesy just what sort of miles. The reports conflict. Some tell of the Sierra de Maracayú continuing eastward between the Pequery and the Taquary, according to Don Felix de Azara's report. Others declare that the continuation of the sierra between those tributaries is merely a range of low, rolling hills, not at all mountainous. Others yet maintain that from the Pequery to the Taquary is all level savannas.

"However that may be, you will certainly have to cross the beds of many small rivers in the course of your dash and will be lucky if you find any not utterly dry. Death by thirst will be a real danger, for you will not be able to ride that hundred leagues at any such rate as one rides, for instance, the hundred and thirteen leagues from Buenos Aires to Santa Fé, which travellers complete in six days or even five, and the couriers in three days and a half. You will find no towns, not even such little towns as San Pedro, San Nicolas and Rosario; no villages, not even such miserable villages as Areco and Arecife, not a post-house, not even such wretched post-huts as relieve the journey from Santa Fé to Buenos Aires. You will come to regard a mud-floored, mud-walled, half-thatched post-hut with its hovel out-kitchen, dirty children, pigs and chickens, and crazy horse-corral, as a palace; would hail the sight of one as a taste of luxury. You may find human habitations; if so, they will likely be worse.

"And there lies your chief danger.

"Don Felix de Azara had no difficulties in Guayrá, and naturally. He held a commission from each King and had a guard of two companies of soldiers, one Portuguese and the other Spanish. They smoothed over all obstacles. You must chance very unsettled conditions.

"The slave-raids of the Mamelucos ceased fully a hundred and fifty years ago; because, after the Jesuits were driven out and the fragments of aboriginal tribes remaining completely exterminated, there were no more natives, converted or heathen, to enslave. The Paulistas had made

Guayrá a desert lonelier than the Gran Chaco. It was emptier of human life than any part of the continent.

"After that time occasional pioneers were attracted into it from the adjacent fringes of settlements; some from San Paulo or Santa Catarina in Brazil, others from upper Misiones. From the first encounters between these two trickles of settlers Guayrá has been the scene of a strange sort of strife, that is, for more than a hundred years. It is not war, not even such a squalid semblance of war as Artigas has kept up in the Banda Oriental of late. But it is always fighting, or the likelihood of bloodshed.

"The grim, isolated Gauchos of the interior savannas are boorish and sanguinary folk, even among blood-kinsmen. Brawls and murders are frequent. Every man is on his guard against any stranger. Yet, if both speak the same language they likely pass each other by with mere surly gruffness. But if one speaks Portuguese and the other Spanish, every encounter is a duel to the death, and if any household gets wind of a homestead of the other stock within ten leagues, they plan a stealthy approach and a night attack, ending in ruthless massacre and total extermination.

"So life has gone on in Guayrá, a life of isolated families each fending for itself with terrific savagery, little mitigated by the few missionary priests who have penetrated that remote district. It has gone on with variations of failure and success, with temporary advantage on the side now of the Spanish squatters, now on that of the Portuguese, but without any organised effort on either side.

"But of late, since the revolution, rumours have reached Paraguay of increased activity among the Brazilians and of massacres of the Spaniards recalling the exploits of the Paulists against the Jesuits, so that the name 'Mamelucos' is again applied to parties of Brazilians scouring the province and slaughtering all who speak the other tongue.

"You will see from all this that you will carry your life in your hand.

"Of course, once relaunched on the Paraná below the cataraacts, you will be perfectly safe, may explore at leisure the country on either bank, and should find the rest of your journey to Candelaria a real pleasure.

"From Candelaria to Asuncion you will have much the same sort of jaunt as you had from Yaguaron to Caapucú."

## (2)

During his ride to or from the suburban barracks, the very afternoon preceding his evening instructions to Hawthorne, Francia's horse had shied at a stray cur, and, when the little brute ran after him yelping and barking, the Dictator had very nearly been unhorsed by his plunging mount.

As usual, he had called his lieutenants at once on returning to the Palacio and had given a general order to exterminate all vagrant and ownerless dogs.

The next morning Hawthorne set out early, on horseback, for El Zapo's shipyard, since he wanted some trifling alterations made on the deck of the vessel on which he was to ascend the river, and knew that Soloaga, whose workshop was nearer than Riquelme's, would procrastinate until the last moment, whereas El Zapo was reliably prompt.

Hero, of course, ran before the horse, scurrying off in an ecstasy of happy companionship, and then tearing back to demonstrate his affection by every token within the scope of the canine sign language.

They were threading the tangle of lanes south of Payaguá Brook, between the barracks and El Zapo's shipyard, when Hero, after much frisking, tail-wagging, and joyous barking, dashed round a cactus-hedged corner and vanished from sight. A moment later Hawthorne heard shots; first one, then a rattling fusillade. Between the last sounded a dog's shrill yelp of dismay and pain, and then the air was pierced by a sort of tremolo of yelping expressive of terror, agony, and hope of protection, which ear-splitting noise grew louder as it rapidly came nearer. Three more shots punctuated it.

Then Hero came into view round the corner, before Hawthorne's mount, urged by whip and spur, could turn it.

At once the solicitous master sprang to earth and gathered his idol into his arms. A brief examination showed that only one bullet had struck him and that had shot off

the extra toe of his left hind-foot. Like a man who loses a finger in battle, Hero had suffered ten times as much pain as if shot through the heart, and had become temporarily frantic. But the ultimate injury was trifling.

Just as Hawthorne assured himself that the dog was not otherwise injured, a dozen *quarteleros* ran helter-skelter round the corner and yelled at him in Guarani to get out of the way and let them shoot the dog. When he vigorously replied that the dog was his, they chorused that they had El Supremo's orders to shoot all dogs running at large. Several threatened to shoot anyhow, if he would not stand aside; two made as if to bayonet the dog, and one aimed at Hero's head a blow with his clubbed musket, and barely missed.

Hawthorne, who was amazed that they did not recognise him, was proclaiming himself El Supremo's friend and intimate and threatening dire vengeance, when Zorilla panted up and commanded:

"Seize the fool! Pull the dog away from him!"

Hawthorne stood up tall, Hero between his feet.

"Pull my dog away from me!" he roared. "Seize me!"

At that, Zorilla recognised him, with a malignant leer of baffled cruelty. He apologised and assured the foreigner that his dog was perfectly safe.

But Hawthorne took no chances. Slung across his master's saddle-bow, docile and cowed, yet pathetically grateful, Hero completed their progress to El Zapo's and the return to Casa Mayorga.

(3)

The morning before his departure, Hawthorne arranged for a long, undisturbed visit to the prison. Cecilia received him with her customary politeness, unwarmed by any sign that she was glad to see him. She embroidered serenely as he talked, listening while he described what he meant to do, and how he intended to go about it. She made no comments, nor did she say anything while he told how long he was likely to be gone. He said nothing of the dangers of his venture or of the chance that he might never come back.

Cecilia herself at this point began to ask questions about

the rivers, the Indians in the forests, the game, the pampas of Guayrá, the falls of the Gran Salto, the rapids below them, the Artigueños in Misiones. Hawthorne replied at length.

When he paused, Cecilia unexpectedly spoke in French.

"Monsieur Guillermo," she said, "how do people address you in English?"

"They say 'Mr. Hawthorne' generally," Hawthorne replied, "or use no form of address whatever. New Englanders are not ceremonious. My old friends use my first name."

"I mean," Cecilia pursued, shaking her head, "how does it sound when one addresses you at home, using your whole name? Pronounce it for me, if you please."

"William Hawthorne," he uttered.

Cecilia put her head on one side with a pretty air of attention.

"Say it again!" she commanded.

He repeated the syllables deliberately.

Cecilia sighed.

"I can pronounce French," she said, with a shrug, "and Spanish, but I am sure I should never learn English."

Hawthorne regarded her without speaking.

"And when your old friends address you by your first name," she resumed, "how does that sound?"

"William," said Hawthorne; "or Will, or Willy, or Bill, or Billy."

"Five names!" Cecilia cried.

"It is like saying Pancho, Panchito, Curro or Currito for Francisco," Hawthorne explained.

"Say them over," Cecilia bade.

She listened with her head charmingly inclined.

"I do not like the last three at all!" she proclaimed.

"Say the first and second again."

She had a coquettish, tantalising air of making ready to pronounce them after him.

But she did not.

"I am sure," she said, still in French, "I could never learn to utter such sounds."

When he rose to go, she also rose. She seemed to Hawthorne to flush and pale.

"Señor Don Guillermo," she said, "you will be gone



long, at the best. I shall think of you. You have given me many gifts. Let me give you one."

The flowers he had brought her she had placed in her belt. She took them out, selected three, put one in her hair, and held out one to Hawthorne, retaining the other in her left hand. Hawthorne bowed over her hand, kissed it in the courtly Spanish fashion, and took the flower.

Her lips appeared just about to form the words: "Good-bye, Will," but she said instead, "Adios, Señor Don Guillermo."

"Adios, Doña Cecilia," said Hawthorne.

When he was outside the stockade he looked back. Cecilia was visible at the door of her hut. It seemed to Hawthorne she held to her lips his flower.

(4)

That night, for the first and last time, Hawthorne was one of two guests at supper at the Palacio. The second guest was Beltran.

Hawthorne had looked forward to a most enjoyable triangular conversation, an evening to be remembered. It turned out to be an evening to be long remembered, but not enjoyable.

From the moment they were seated Hawthorne realised a most difficult situation, a tense and tingling atmosphere. Apparently not one of the three had foreseen anything of the kind, probably any one of them would have rejected any anticipation of such conditions as ridiculously impossible. But they were comically real, disagreeably and menacingly real.

It was instantly apparent that every symptom of their mutual friendship irritated Francia, every token of Hawthorne's fondness for Beltran exasperated him, every indication of Beltran's liking Hawthorne infuriated him. The situation was immediately delicate and embarrassing. It became all the more ticklish when it was borne in upon Hawthorne that Beltran was equally jealous of his high standing with the Dictator and of his admiration for Francia, that every evidence of past favours or spontaneous deference was an offence to him. And he could have

laughed aloud as he became aware that he himself was fairly quivering with the like feelings; that Beltran, somehow, appeared an interloper diminishing the Dictator's regard for him and Francia a rival filching away Beltran's former affection and friendship towards him.

His inward philosophising on the strangeness of the situation merged into a sort of brown-study, in which he heard the others' voices as if distant and blurred, out of which he made mechanical monosyllabic replies. From this dangerous abstraction he was roused to find himself a party to a triangular altercation perilously near to degenerating into a violent wrangle. Its beginnings were lost in his momentary self-absorption, and he could never recollect how it had been started or by whom. In its progress it consisted mainly of a series of mild restrained arguments on the Dictator's part maintaining that beliefs in apparitions, spectres, or in any reappearances of the spirits of the dead were contemptible superstitions, unworthy of any sane or cultured man, countered by belligerent affirmations on Beltran's part that an entirely rational and intellectual man might believe in ghosts and visions and in the possibility of seeing and conversing with the shades of departed acquaintances and that he, at any rate, so believed and asserted his right to the belief and the reasonableness of such beliefs.

The matter of the quarrel was innocuous, its manner most risky. Beltran was sulky and surly over each argument advanced by the Dictator, Francia sneering and sarcastic; Hawthorne could not keep silence, and every utterance of his, no matter how impersonal nor how carefully worded, brought both his fellow-diners round upon him as if mortally affronted. He began to be irritated himself, not so much at Francia's hardly abnormal innuendoes as at Beltran's almost childish reiterations of his complete faith in communications to the living by the souls of the deceased.

The discussion gradually altered its quality, the subject of it becoming almost forgotten, and the main interest again being the mutual jealousies of the three.

The blend of tragedy and farce, the interplay of raw, crude primitive passion overlaid by surface courtliness, and leashed by habits of stern self-control, created a complex of

tensions in the stress of which Hawthorne felt they were three incipient lunatics.

Yet they behaved as three diplomats; ate, drank, toasted each other, smoked, took snuff and played at amiability. They even played three games of chess, of which that between Beltran and Hawthorne proved, to the astonishment of all of them, the longest, the hardest fought and the best played.

How to make his escape had been a nightmare to Hawthorne from the first. It turned out as easy as possible. Francia conducted them to the main entrance of the Palacio and bade them good-night as if no shadow had crossed their evening. And the two linked arms and walked off as amicably as they had come.

(5)

Next morning Hawthorne was accompanied from the Mayorga mansion to the river-bank by a sort of body-guard of friends: Carmelo Mayorga, Dr. Bargas, Don Gregorio, Saturnino Bedoya, and also Dr. Parlett, more than half sober. Before the Palacio they waited while he briefly paid his respects to the Dictator and received his papers. At the landing-stairs he found assembled to bid him farewell and wish him good fortune a large gathering: Beltran, as beaming as if no cloud had ever come between them; Don Gumesindo, all self-importance and long-winded harangues; Don Cristobal de Maria, embarrassed and punctilious; Don Mauricio Zelaya with Don Meliton Isasi; and Don Manuel Bianquet, accompanied by young Marcos Barbeito and old Avelino Mendez.

Don Meliton's brig, the *Inglesita*, had been chartered to convey the expedition up the Rio Paraguay to the mouth of the Rio Blanco. The wind was fair and the adieus were brief. Very shortly Asuncion faded from view.

The wind continued fair. There were no Carbonels to squabble and wrangle. Lopez and his men gambled as incessantly as on the way to the *yerbales*, but somehow more pleasantly, to all appearance. The steady breeze kept off the mosquitoes, at least they were few and bearable. The Payaguá Indians were taciturn, and their odours not unendurable.

In fact, Hawthorne spent most of his time with the Payaguás. Though the brig was making the up-voyage as rapidly as navigation against the current would be performed by a sailing vessel, yet no river craft impelled by sails could keep up with a lapacho wood canoe paddled by stalwart Payaguás. Daily Hawthorne had one or another of the canoes slung overside soon after dawn; daily he set off in it, landing sometimes on the settled bank of the river, oftener in the reeds and waterside forest-strip along the Gran Chaco. Most of the day he spent on the water or gunning ashore. Daily they shot downstream in the late afternoon with a fine load of game: armadillos, water-hogs, bustards, pheasants, royal duck or what not. Never did they bring off quite all Hawthorne shot. He regretted Hero, necessarily left behind at Asuncion. But always they had enough game to vary their diet. Sometimes, if game was scarce, he shot a wild ox in the dense underwood by the river on the Chaco side.

Above the outfall of the Ypané Guazu, he landed oftener on the civilised east bank and investigated possible sites for a penal colony. One or two pleased him.

Without an hour of headwind, without one single grounding on a sand bar, without any untoward event, they reached the mouth of the Rio Blanco, which one of the Payaguás' *caciques* identified convincingly.

There the nine canoes were launched, loaded and manned, the *Inglesita* dropped downstream with the current, the canoes, their paddlers chanting a wild, guttural chorus, headed up the winding, forest-hung reaches of the Rio Blanco.

Each canoe carried a horse, its rider and his *recado*, its share of the provisions and nine Payaguá Indians: eight paddlers and their *cacique*.

Hawthorne, seated by the *cacique* under a little awning at the stern, found much to wonder at and admire.

The canoe, fully forty feet long, was one single and magnificent piece of timber, the scooped-out hollow trunk of a superb lapacho tree, taking the water with unsurpassable grace and lightness.

The eight paddlers, naked except for the merest apology for a waist-cloth, plied their nine-foot paddles so mightily that the canoe made full ten miles an hour against the

rapid current; trees, islands and promontories marched towards them, fled past, and vanished behind them as every moment they opened up new vistas of enchanting scenery. Scenery, however, of a certain sameness.

The paddlers themselves fascinated Hawthorne. On his river trips near Asuncion, on his hunting-days, on the voyage, he had ignored his boatmen, alert with interest in his surroundings. Now, glutted with pageants of tropical vegetation, he found leisure and inclination to study the Payaguás.

Tall, springy, every muscle discernible, they were the incarnation of ease, grace and freedom of action, and seemed as fresh and vigorous after a long day's paddling as at the start; rhythmically bending and rising alternately at each stroke, seeming to take a perpetual pleasure in their toil; every pose and movement of their lithe bodies, every lineament of their countenances expressive of a vivid delight in being on the water.

Also they were perfectly simultaneous in their movements, and answered instantly to the cries of their *cacique*, who, although seated in the stern, acted as pilot as well as steersman. At his: "*Há, há,*" or "*Alá, alá,*" they swerved instantaneously in the direction indicated.

From the time they entered the Rio Blanco, Lopez would not allow a gun to be fired. In the first place, he said, they must husband their ammunition. In the second place, they knew not what or what sort of Indians might lurk in the neighbourhood. So the Payaguás' arrows provided practically all the food for the expedition, and, as long as they were near water, this was more than they could eat; amazing gorgers as the soldiers were, the Payaguás were even more notable hunters. If the *cacique* caught sight of a *dorado*, he uttered but a brief shout of three or four bitten-off syllables. Instantly one of the paddlers, glancing at once in the right direction, softly laid aside his paddle, not in the least marring the stroke of the rest, noiselessly grasped his mighty iron-wood bow, transfixed the fish with his six-foot arrow, and drew it in with the cord, four feet of tempting food.

If it was a pheasant or wild turkey skulking among the thick boughs, its death was equally swift and certain. Even the wild hogs that came to drink on the banks never sur-

vived one arrow, scarcely struggled, so fatal and so unerring was the Payaguás' aim.

When the brief dusk preluded the night and they went ashore, it was a marvel to see how rapidly the Payaguás obtained from the stream a supply of fish so generous that never once did they consume it all, and one Payaguá could eat an incredible quantity of broiled fish. Pork, pheasant, turkey or such delicacies as *dorado*, they left for the soldiers, Lopez or Hawthorne. Fish, preferably cat-fish, was what a Payaguá relished.

When the canoes grounded hourly and scraped bottom the rest of the day, it was manifestly time to abandon them. Then there was much jabbering about a landing, marks and a hiding place. To return for those canoes, even if two years later, was plainly their purpose.

Once afoot, their faces no longer happy, merely doggedly resolute, each Payaguá packed a staggering burden, and bore up under it manfully. During the passage of the Sierra de Amambahay, they never murmured, but their delight at reaching again navigable streams was so pathetically intense that Hawthorne was not over nice as to whether they had struck the headwaters of the Anhanduhy or the Ivinheyma. Then and there he set the Payaguás to felling lapacho trees and hollowing and shaping canoes. The work went merrily, and in a few days they were provided with *balsas*: canoes fastened side by side in pairs by means of stout canes laid across both, forming a sort of deck; an ideal design of vessel for floating down the rapid current of an unknown river, being uncapsisable, steady, and swift when going with the stream.

In these they made the voyage down the Ivinheyma and the Paraná. At the mouth of each tributary they camped, and Hawthorne, convoyed only by Lopez and one soldier, explored the smaller stream, in a hasty party of two canoes. Tolomeo always went along, for, timid as Hawthorne had thought him, the mulatto boy developed into a good shot and learned woodcraft so rapidly that he soon seemed as much an adept as if bred in the forests.

Lopez, whether superintending canoes, *balsas*, horses or porters, was a marvel of promptness and celerity. But at times, without warning, he appeared seized with fits of indolence. In these he obstinately refused to budge, no mat-

ter how favourable the weather, wind or current might be. It seemed as if he acted upon mere whim; he never gave any reason for these exasperating halts; to all appearances he was actuated by alteration of mood only; but Hawthorne always more than suspected that he had his reasons and was governed by a clear-headed judgment. Nevertheless, at sight of an indescribable and inscrutable smile about the lieutenant's plump mouth, Hawthorne was thrown into a passion of inward rage, for he knew that argument was futile, and the halt would continue till Lopez chose to proceed.

On such halts, and oftener at ordinary evening camps, Lopez occasionally fell moody and gloomed in silence. This was not often, and was entirely unlike his general geniality. In such fits of gloom, Hawthorne sometimes heard him mutter:

"They certainly deserved it; they certainly deserved it."

Once, Lopez, who had been chatting sociably, uttered these words after a brief silence and in so conversational a tone that Hawthorne, who had fallen into a muse, unconsciously replied with the query:

"Who deserved what?"

"Narciso and Agustin," Lopez answered, half in a dream, "certainly deserved to be shot."

Then, as it were, he wakened with a start and looked much disconcerted.

Hawthorne, for that matter, was a bit embarrassed. Travellers in the wilderness have to be careful of any intrusion on each other's meditations, for fear of causing that aloofness which terribly strains constant association. That Lopez was brooding over the fate of his detested cousins was the last conjecture that would have occurred to Hawthorne.

After scarcely an adventure and not one misadventure, they sighted the pillar of cloud above the first and mightiest cataract of the Gran Salto. At the end of the last reach of still water, where they could descry not many hundred yards southward the roughening and suck at the beginning of the rapids above the fall, the *caciques* brought their canoes to the Guayrá bank. There the horses, *recados*, arms and ammunition were disembarked and, after one day's rest, they girthed up for their dash round through the

pampas. The Payaguás, professing complete understanding of where they were to meet again and how they were to reach it, pushed off, even gaily. The horsemen spurred steadily eastward.

## CHAPTER XXXII

## THE PENINSULA

NOT many mornings after New Year's Day of 1817, when Hawthorne and his party, in the full heat of a Paraguayan summer, were painfully worming their way through the jungles of the Brazilian frontier, a single canoe shot out from the north shore of Lake Ipacaray.

The sun was not yet an hour high, the dawn breeze had not yet died and still rippled the almost calm waters. The sky was deep blue without a single cloud. Except the swift canoe, there was no sign of human life anywhere visible, for Estancia de San Bernardino was already lost to view behind a point of the wooded bank and Estancia de la Purificacion was still far out of sight away to the east.

The canoe was paddled by six muscular Guarani peons. Under its awning were two women, one young and the other old. The elder was a squab-figured Guarani, plainly all her life nurse and lady's-maid and complacently proud of her position of trust. She was wearing the usual plain white cotton *tupoi*, loose-girdled. Her feet were bare as they were brown. Her beautiful charge wore low, iridescent bronze shoes, with a narrow strip over the instep, white silk stockings, and a *tupoi* edged with knotted fringe, embroidered at the hem, on the sleeves and around her neck. It was belted close to an obviously corseted waist. She was enough like Don Lupercio to be his daughter instead of his niece.

As the canoe was about midway between the first point they had rounded and the next beyond and perhaps fifty yards off the shore, where was visible a continuous greenery of palm-trees, orange-trees, forest-foliage, and nothing else, the Guarani woman uttered a short sentence. Instantly the canoe swerved and headed away from the shore, while the paddlers quickened their stroke.



Ventura spoke sharply:

"What was that you said, Fruela?"

"I told Ramon," Fruela replied, "that this was the place to turn."

"Why turn?" Ventura exclaimed. "Is there a new mud-flat off Punta Caiguie? It cannot be so shallow but we can cross it, anyhow."

"There is no sand bar," Fruela said; "but that was the place to turn."

"What does this mean?" Ventura exclaimed. "You know I wish to reach Purificacion as quickly as possible. We should keep close to the shore. Tell them to turn at once."

Fruela said nothing.

No servants on earth were ever more faithful than Guaranies, none more devoted and respectful. Fruela's behaviour amazed Ventura. She looked about her.

"Why," she cried, "we are crossing the lake!"

Fruela remained silent.

"Ramon!" Ventura called. "I do not wish to go in this direction. Turn to your left. Head at once for Estancia de la Purificacion, as I ordered you! Do you hear me?"

If Ramon heard, he gave no sign. He never turned his head. She saw the bull-neck below his broad-brimmed hat, the working of his huge muscles under his loose shirt, the poise of his hips, the swing of his arms. His paddle dipped and rose, dipped and rose, the ripples round it of precisely the same form each time it dipped. The other peons worked exactly as he did and in perfect time.

"Ramon!" Ventura called, louder and more imperiously. "Obey me! Turn the canoe!"

Ramon paid no attention, nor did Pablo, nor the other four. Steadily, hurriedly, they paddled on.

Then Ventura lost her temper and soundly berated her peons and her nurse. The utmost she was capable in the way of chiding, remonstrance and expostulation had absolutely no effect on them. She was too dignified a girl for more scolding, too poised to lose her self-control. She fell silent and thoughtful.

Disobedience, from Guarani peons, was a portent as amazing as if oxen had spoken. There were no more docile,

biddable serfs in all the world. Ventura could scarcely have been more dazed if the canoe had remained glued to the water or had lifted itself bodily into the air.

Her impulse was to fly into a passion. But she reflected that they were evidently pursuing a definite purpose and that Fruela alone was muscular enough to seize and restrain her as if she had been a mere child. Any one of the hulking peons could have held her as easily as an infant. She was too patrician to risk the indignity of personal violence. She raged inwardly at her helplessness. Threats rose to her lips. The occurrence appeared a monstrous nightmare, grotesque and incredible.

Suddenly she sat bolt-upright among her soft grass-cloth cushions. She flushed crimson and then paled. It must be a very powerful motive that would lead Guarani servants to disobey their mistress. It flashed on her what that motive must be, what was the one authority a Guarani held higher than that of an employer.

She settled herself with elaborate composure and began to eye the south bank of the lake. At first she could make out nothing, except the mere colour of the forest-clad shore. As they drew near, the outlines of low hills, the points and coves of the margin of the land began to be discernible. When they were close enough she caught sight of what she had conjectured, a picket of horsemen by the water's edge. Presently she made out another. The two were not close together, but considerably over a hundred yards apart. Between them a sort of rounded peninsula jutted out to the lake, sufficiently elevated to be firm, dry ground, free of bogs and marsh-mud, low enough to be easily accessible. It was wooded with a grove of close orange-trees, not a palm among them. Along the water it was edged with a narrow strip of clean sand, clear of the fallen, water-logged palm-trunks which defaced and encumbered most of the lake's margin. Towards the broadest bit of sand, just east of the point of the peninsula, her paddlers drove the canoe.

While still many boat-lengths off shore she descried a tent pitched under the orange-trees some twenty yards from the water. In front of it was a small table, on which she divined the gleam of silver. On either side of the table was a chair. One was empty, a shaft of sunlight striking between the overarching leafage glinted brightly on it. On

the other chair sat a tall man, clad entirely in black, his head bare and long black ringlets falling profusely over the crimson *capote* that draped his narrow shoulders.

With a shiver, Ventura recognised the Dictator.

The canoe grated softly on the sand; the four paddlers leapt out and steadied it.

Fruela spoke almost in a whisper:

"The *Carai* waits. Will not the señorita go to him?"

Ventura had too much sense to make a scene. She realised the unspoken threat, the atmosphere of limitless power held mildly in leash. She was of no mind to submit and obey, least of all, a veiled order conveyed by her nurse-maid. But she was too genuinely proud to expose herself to possible compulsion.

As if she had herself planned and ordered this meeting, she stepped daintily from the canoe to the sand.

Francia stood up and walked towards her, a commanding figure, very impressive in such sombre attire, set off and emphasised by the graceful folds of his brilliant *capote*.

"*Buenos días, Señorita!*" he said.

"*Buenos días, Señor Don Gaspar!*" spoke Ventura haughtily, looking him angrily full in the eyes as she dropped him an elaborate and ironical curtsy.

Stepping nearer, he took her unresisting hand, bent over it and kissed it ceremoniously, after the ancient Castilian fashion.

"It was very good of you not to disappoint me," he said.

Coldly withdrawing her hand, Ventura spoke, her voice vibrating with suppressed rage.

"Goodness had nothing to do with my coming," she said. "I ordered my canoe to visit Aunt Paquita, and was haled here, as a lamb to the butcher, by my own peons."

"A very tigerish lamb," Francia smiled, "and you will find me no butcher. Believe me, I gave no such commands. You were haled here? Did you not receive my letter?"

"I received no letter," Ventura told him.

"I'll wager Fruela received it," Francia declared. "Pray oblige me by asking her."

Ventura turned.

"Fruela!" she called.

When the woman stood near, she said:

"You had a letter for me?"

"And have, señorita," Fruela confessed, producing it and handing it to her.

"Why did you not give me this before?" Ventura demanded.

"The *Carai*," Fruela explained, "wished to speak to the señorita here at this hour. The *Carai*'s wishes must be fulfilled. It was better to bring the señorita here first and give her the letter afterwards. Then she was certain to be here, as ordered."

Ventura tucked the letter into her belt.

"Wait for me at the canoe, Fruela!" she commanded.

"That," said Francia, "is the simple native, devoid of subtlety or insight. They are all stolid, dull brute-beasts, indeed!"

"I am here," Ventura said, "and most eager to return across the lake."

"You shall return as you came," Francia reassured her, "and before the heat of the day."

"What, then," she asked, "do you want with me?"

"The favour," Francia said, "of a brief conversation. Your maid is but a few yards away and in plain sight. Do me the favour to be seated."

Ventura gazed at the table and the two chairs, walked to that from which the sunrays had now shifted and sat down.

The urn steamed on the table, the blue flame of the spirit lamp flickering below it. About it were gourds, *bombillas*, *panales*, lemons and a bowl of *yerba*-powder.

"Will you not accept my *maté*?" the Dictator asked, seating himself.

"Yes," Ventura replied; "even a kidnapped prisoner may accept *maté* of her captor."

"Do not put it that way," Francia demurred. "You are angry and harsh. Conceive that I have had all my life but one genuine conversation with a woman. That was with you at *Madrina Juana's fiesta*. I have thought of it ever since, as I have since my boyhood thought of the rose your mother threw me. I have planned this interview for months. I have had to make most careful arrangements that not a soul might know, learn or suspect. I have ridden ten leagues by starlight to be here. If you refuse me an hour of chat, you may this instant re-enter your canoe and be

paddled away. I desire a talk with you, but not unless freely accorded. I scorn anything made mine by duress. Will you not accept a gourd of *maté*?"

"Yes," Ventura said; "*maté* will be good for me. I have been frightened and am still bewildered. Had we not better talk in French?"

Francia smiled.

"I am vain of my fluency in that language," he said, preparing a gourd of *maté*, "but your servants understand only Guarani and my pickets and sentinels are more than three ear-shots away. There is no need for caution from eavesdroppers, and we both think better in Castilian."

"Spanish let it be, then," said Ventura, taking the gourd he held out.

When she laid it down, Francia said, placing his beside it:

"To begin with, tell me something of your arrival at San Bernardino and of your life there; I know nothing of it, and am sincerely interested."

"Sincerely!" Ventura cried, her face aflame with scorn and uncontrollable anger. "Can I believe you sincere about anything? You are so perfectly in touch with San Bernardino that you can not only move my servants to thwart me but can control them better than I could; and you have the effrontery to tell me that you know nothing of what goes on there! You must know everything, and more than I know. Your spies, I presume, are in every out-building, in every corner of the house! I know I am not your spy, nor is my father. I must assume, however, that every other human being on the *estancia* is your puppet!"

Francia looked stern, astonished, hurt and pleased all at once. He took a very big pinch of snuff.

"You certainly are not afraid of me!" he said. "And you do not bore me calling me 'Excellency' every third breath. All that is delightful. But you overrate my capacity for omniscience and overestimate the length of my arm. I am not omnipotent nor omnipresent, even vicariously. My Guaranies adore me and never fail to do my will as they understand it. But they are incapable of generalisations and mostly can remember but one order at a time. If told to collect information about a specified matter, they

let nothing escape them, and report each fact or bit of gossip with incredible speed. But not one would think of transmitting news of any occurrence unless news was asked for. Only once or twice in my life have I known a Guarani to display such originality as Fruela has just exhibited.

"Really I have but vague and fragmentary intimations of what has been going on at San Bernardino. The best intentioned Indians are singularly brief and laconic in their messages, often totally unintelligible. I know practically nothing of how you found your home or how life has passed for you there since you returned."

Ventura stared at Francia's face.

Then, suddenly, she seized the letter from her belt, ripped it open, and glanced through it. The expression of her face altered.

"I am not sure," she said, "that this letter would have brought me here, but it is a letter."

Francia looked on silently while she lit it at the spirit flame under the urn, and watched it burn to ashes.

"Why did you read it so precipitately?" he asked.

"It occurred to me," she said, "that there was really no letter and you had ordered Fruela and Ramon to do just what they did."

"You are over-subtle," Francia commented. "Are you convinced?"

"My suspicions," she countered, "were at least not verified."

"And having misconceived me about the letter," he said, "can you not credit that you misjudged me about prying and ferreting? And will you not do me the favour to tell me of San Bernardino and your home-coming?"

Ventura's face clouded.

"My home-coming!" she echoed bitterly. "Oh! how I had looked forward to it so long, so ardently! I had made such plans for my life at home! I was to be such good friends with my stepmother. *Madrastra* Pastora and I had not been on the best of terms, I was so insulted at father forgetting my mother so soon and it seemed almost indecent for him to marry a girl scarcely older than I.

"But in the long years far from home I had come to feel I had been wrong, that it was very natural he should marry again, that they had a right to love each other. I

was going to be so friendly with her, so helpful to him, such a comfort to both!

"Uncle would hardly tell me anything, as we rode by Luque and the upper ford of the Salado. But Lupercio never talked much. He said neither was well, but he gave me no hint, he did not frighten me!

"When father did not ride out to meet me, not even half a league, I was hurt and pained, but not prescient. I had no premonitions.

"When I dismounted before the house, my father nowhere in sight, I was violently incensed. I felt neglected, almost insulted. But I was not at all enlightened.

"It was wholly without warning that I came suddenly upon him seated by the catafalque, his hand upon *Madras-tra* Pastora's dead hand. His attitude of bowed, stricken grief was terrible to behold. I wanted to run to him, to take him in my arms. But I was repelled by his total stillness. He did not notice me, he ignored me.

"I stood before him.

"He raised his face.

"I saw his open eyes.

"I understood.

"My father was stone-blind."

She stared before her across the lake, her lips quivering, her eyes brimming with tears. Francia silently regarded her profile until she had controlled herself and turned.

"Such was my home-coming," she said, "a funeral the very first day I reached home; a blind and bereaved father to care for, who will not be soothed or comforted, gains very little solace from the utmost I can do and remains desolate."

Francia let another silence pass before he spoke, judging the moment carefully.

"Is Don Toribio's health good," he asked, "except for his blindness?"

"In all respects," Ventura said, "he is otherwise in good health."

Francia spoke in measured tones.

"You may judge," he said, "to what extent my fragments of information about San Bernardino have been distorted and incomplete. I have been under the impression

that Don Toribio's mind was clouded or that he was even totally witless."

Ventura sat up straight.

"Nothing," she said, "could be further from the facts. His mind is extraordinarily keen and lively. He has been most kind to me, and has made great efforts to interest himself in my adventures and in all that happened to me, even in the smallest details. He has done violence to his inclinations and forced himself to ask countless questions. He tries to seem interested. He has even laboriously striven to divert himself by having me teach him French and English. But it is a pitiful penance to him, that is all too plain. He is thinking of my stepmother and of his lost sight."

"If his mind is so clear," enquired Francia, "how has the false impression gained currency?"

"His sightlessness weighs down upon him," Ventura said. "I have heard of blind *estancieros* who would have their servants mount them on horseback daily and would take long rides, a servant on either side, judging their position by hearing and keeping distance perfectly; not only cantering, but even galloping. But he will not mount a horse at all. I have begged and implored him to ride with me. But he refuses. I have heard of blind men who found amusement in caring for a garden. He will not hear of the idea. He will not walk, even leaning on my arm. All day he sits in his chair under the corridor. He will not stir. All he will say is that God has cursed him with blindness; that if God wished him to garden or to ride he would restore his vision."

"How long has he been blind?" Francia queried.

"He began to notice that he saw badly more than four years ago," Ventura replied. "By two years ago he could barely see to move about. By a year ago he was totally blind."

"It seems to me," Francia said, "he might be curable."

"Curable!" she cried. "What is curable in Paraguay? We recover if we are stronger than the disease; we die if the disease is more powerful than we. It is all the will of God. But who cures whom? What sort of doctors have we in these wilds? Mulatto natives, who pull teeth and break the jaw of one victim out of every ten; who bleed every



wretch, man or woman, old or young, who falls under their malpractice; who use or misuse herbs and simples: owlsh old quacks from Spain, who ride on mules, with high-peaked saddles, all silver on the peaks and on their clumsy bridles, who look wise, prescribe some harmless draft, and leave the patient to live or die; who give up visiting in the winter because, forsooth, as they say in their ignorance, nature does not then assist them and therefore they wait until the spring."

She looked very handsome pouring out her indignation in this long tirade. Francia never took his eyes off her. When she paused, he said:

"Surgery might cure him."

"Surgery!" she cried. "In Paraguay! What irony to mention it! If I had him in Paris or in London or even in Philadelphia, he might be cured if his malady is one surgery can cure. But even in Paris there is much risk connected with surgery of the eye. Many attempts are fruitless, and there are many causes of blindness against which surgery is of no avail.

"I have thought over it all again and again. If I cannot stir him to take a walk in the sun, how could I rouse him to undertake a long sea-voyage? If I could, we might never even reach Buenos Aires, such is the confusion and uncertainty along the river. There is the risk of wrecks at sea also. No, the thing is possible, but not practicable. It would be hard for a well man, with good sight. It was hard for me, young and full of hope. He is blind and old and hopeless. No help can be hoped for in his case. Resignation is his only recourse."

Francia made no comment for a moment. Then he said:

"You are certainly a great solace to him."

"Not a great solace," Ventura bitterly answered, "nor a small solace. For all the good I do him I might as well be in Asuncion, in Buenos Aires, or in Europe. He tries to make me think I help him, he is very grateful, he thanks me continually. But he does not hoodwink me. I know! I am really of no use. I might as well be in England or Philadelphia."

"If you might as well be in Asuncion," Francia said, "perhaps you will not refuse to listen to what I came here to say to you."

Ventura inclined her head, without speaking. She picked from the silver bowl on the table a midrib of *yerba*-leaf—a little stick, as it were, as long as her finger—and she put the end of it between her teeth, munching on it meditatively.

“I have told you,” Francia began, “how much I enjoyed our talks, both before and after supper, at *Madrina Juana’s* *fiesta*; how unique in my life the experience, and how delightful! Would it be unpleasantly presumptuous for me to say that you also seemed to enjoy talking with me?”

“I did enjoy every bit of it,” Ventura declared. “I have sat and conversed with President Madison, with Secretary Monroe, with ex-President Jefferson; in England, I talked with the marvellous, though bearish, Mr. Cobbett, with Mr. Canning and Lord Castlereagh, and suffered the vinous urbanities of the Prince Regent; in France I met nearly all the Marshals, was presented to the great Emperor and endured his monosyllabic attempt at monologue; I have encountered no man as impressive as yourself and no conversationalist at all your equal. I was as delighted as possible.”

“Do you remember,” Francia queried, “what we said to each other?”

“Not all of it,” spoke Ventura gravely; “we talked too fast and we said too much.”

“Do you recall,” he asked, “what you told me of courtship in England and in the United States?”

“In general I do,” Ventura meditated; “but not word for word.”

“I do not recall the words either,” Francia said, “though I shall never forget your tones. What I remember continually is the vivid picture you conjured up of a state of human society, where dictation or interference from parents plays a far smaller part in bringing about marriages than anywhere else in the world; where a very considerable proportion of the couples mate because they choose each other of their own volition and accord; where scores of cultivated, intellectual men, even great men, find helpmates in all respects their equals in culture, intellect and breadth of outlook upon life; where the mutual comprehension and sympathy between husband and wife create conditions in which they are not only far happier than couples mated by

parental arrangement, but in which the man's greatness of soul grows by the help of the woman's fostering care and is led on to higher flights by the glow of her intentions. Do you understand?"

"I begin to understand, I think," Ventura confessed, biting delicately on the end of the bit of *yerba*-stem.

Francia sat up very tall in his chair, his face framed in his abundance of long dark locks, lit, as it were, by the rosy reflection from his crimson cloak; his eyes intent on Ventura's face. He spoke with a quiver in his voice.

"You have had the goodness to compare me to the President of the Estados Unidos, to the Prince Regent of England, to the greatest of all the Emperors of all the ages, and to tell me you relished converse with me more than with any man you ever met. I should be a dolt if I did not rate myself without a compeer in this Paraguay; I should be worse than a numskull did I not perceive your transcending all Paraguayan women far more manifestly than I surpass the men.

"I have thought what a priceless boon it would be for all Paraguayans, present and future, what an invaluable benefit it would be to the republic, what a strengthening and uplift to its Dictator, what a renewal of youth, what an inexpressible happiness to me if I could have the good fortune to find that you feel as I cannot help feeling, that we were made for each other; if I could persuade you to consider becoming my wife."

Ventura stiffened, and her eyes flamed, now turned full on him.

"I!" she cried. "Your wife! I! You have disowned, contemned, even derided your God; you have been a traitor to your King, you have imbrued your hands in the blood of scores of innocent victims, you oppress Paraguay with a tyranny worse than any despotism under which any land ever groaned, and you talk to me of sympathy, of our being made for each other! The fiends in hell would laugh to hear you. I am a true daughter of the Church, a loyal subject to my rightful King whatever my father may be. Your sham republic I despise; I loathe your sanguinary dictatorship; you, I abhor!"

Francia kept his temper and controlled his voice. He

spoke, a sort of mixture of groan and chuckle, his face contorted with a pained smile. He said:

"You certainly are not afraid of me!"

"Not a fibre of me!" Ventura blazed at him.

"That makes me love you all the more fiercely," the Dictator said, "and want you all the more!"

"Want me!" Ventura cried. "I could almost spit in your face to hear you utter the words! I am insulted at the suggestion. The thought sickens me!"

"I do want you!" the Dictator insisted.

She flared at him.

"If you want me," she cried, "why don't you take me?"

"Take you!" Francia babbled, shaken from head to foot, and staring. "Take you?"

"Yes, take me!" she repeated. "I am an impotent prisoner, totally at your mercy, betrayed by my very servants, the daughter of a blind and helpless father. Were you but a transitory chieftain, like any of the local *caudillos* of the pampas, of Cuyo, of Entre Rios, of the Banda Oriental, no one would raise a finger in my defence. And you are no mere leader for the day, no ordinary ruler. You are absolute lord of the land and all below and above it, of the wills and hearts of men. My father, were he never so much himself, would be ennobled by owning you for a son-in-law. Why not speak to him, if you want me?"

"I have already told you why," Francia said earnestly. "It is because I really want you. There are women without number in Paraguay to be had for the asking. I never glance at one. There are as many whose parents would be enraptured with joy to think of being honoured by me. I regard them not. After Petrona jilted me, twenty-one years ago, I never thought of marriage until I saw you. I have no desire for women who throw themselves at my head, who may be bargained for with their parents, nor for any woman taken possession of by main strength. I have never thought of matrimony since I lost Petrona until I met you and heard of English and American habits of courtship. That fired my imagination, the idea that you might spontaneously feel for me as I feel for you; or that I could persuade you."

"Persuade!" Ventura sneered. "The word is ridiculous. I have told you what I think of you."

"You spoke very severely," Francia said.

"No more severely," retorted Ventura, "than is warranted by the facts."

"Facts!" the Dictator cried bitterly. "Facts mean nothing to partisans, and an attitude of mind means everything. You talk of me like that fanatical old bald-pate Bermudo Larreta. You and he see only your side of the facts; as *Madrina* Juana and Gumesindo see only the other side. To them I am an archangel; to the *Pelado* and you I am an archfiend. The truth is neither at the one extreme nor the other. The facts present more than one side, more than two, and the fair interpretation would not be so hideous as your estimation of me."

"That, nevertheless," Ventura maintained, "is and will continue my estimate."

"Women have changed their minds in this world before now," Francia said.

"And change them every day," spoke Ventura, "and will for all the ages of ages; but not I in regard to you."

"You might yet be persuaded, even so," the Dictator insisted.

"Never I!" Ventura scoffed. "Never I!"

The blue flame of the spirit lamp under the steaming urn gave a last flicker and went out.

"Have another cup of *maté*?" Francia suggested.

Ventura burst into harsh laughter.

"That is the way in Paraguay!" she exclaimed. "Tragedy and farce together! Love or hate, life or death, it is always the gourd of *yerba* that intrudes. Do you suppose I could relish food or drink in the midst of this ordeal?"

"I regret," Francia said, "that it has been an ordeal. This is not the midst of it; it has ended. In a moment I shall escort you to your canoe. Will you not sip a *maté* with me before we part? It will be best for you, you really need it."

Ventura inclined her head.

When they laid their gourds on the tray, Francia said:

"I have one question. You are not afraid of me. I could no more coerce you than I could persuade you. Why did you not refuse to talk with me? Why did you assent even that far?"

Ventura shot one glance at him and gazed across the lake.

"Because," she said, "the whole proceeding was so unlike the customs of Paraguay, of Spain, of anywhere; so altogether idiosyncratic of you, yet so cosmopolitan in flavour.

"Besides, I knew I should relish a talk with you. I did not foresee what you were going to talk of. I conjectured you wanted to question me as to the possible political activities of somebody you wrongly thought I might know about. I have heard of such things of Napoleon, tales of such secret interviews with women for that purpose."

Francia stared at her.

"You thought you would relish a conversation with a man of whom you think as you have said?"

"Oh," Ventura cried, "one can enjoy a man's conversation for the moment and yet be terribly shocked at the suggestion of marrying him! There is no necessary connection between enjoying a talk with a man and considering him as a husband."

Francia bowed and stood up.

"And what is your life to be?" he queried.

"The perpetual attempt," Ventura said, "to soothe the last days of a helpless, broken-hearted old man."

"You yourself said," Francia reminded her, "that you did him no good; that you might as well be anywhere else as at San Bernardino."

"It is all too true," Ventura sighed; "but one's duty is not measured by success or hopefulness. One must do one's duty even though shuddering at it, even if it be futile."

"I wish," Francia whispered, "that you realised your duty to Paraguay as you feel it for your father."

"You said," Ventura countered, "that my ordeal was over."

She rose.

"It is over," Francia affirmed. "But I cannot think of you buried at San Bernardino, still less of your years being wasted. Might he not regain the use of his eyes?"

"If I believed the nursery tales of the grotto on Cerro de Santo Tomas," Ventura said, "if I believed that the true cross were really there and capable of transporting itself to the help of the afflicted, I might have hopes for him. But not in this world as God made it for us to live in and suffer and pray."

"But suppose," Francia pressed her, "suppose he could regain his sight. Suppose it could be restored to him."

"Why torture me with the supposition?" Ventura protested.

"Suppose it," Francia insisted. "Would you be happy?"

"Happy!" Ventura cried. "Not the blessed saints in Paradise, not the angels about the throne of the Madonna are happier than I should be. What would I not do to win him sight again! What would I not give!"

"Suppose," Francia held on, "that it could be done, not by a miracle, but by art?"

"Why suppose what only tantalises, only agonises me to think of, it is so impossible?"

"Suppose it," Francia persisted. "Suppose any skill of man could bring it about?"

Ventura clasped her hands, fervently, her eyes gazing upwards.

"Oh," she cried, "how grateful I should be!"

"Suppose I," Francia summed up, "could bring it about?"

Ventura's gaze met his full. She took a short step towards him.

"You!" she cried. "Power has intoxicated your wits. You are supreme over men, you can foretell eclipses, but you cannot work miracles, you cannot remove the curse of God!"

"Suppose I could cause this particular miracle, if you call it such?" Francia persevered.

"The supposition," Ventura breathed sadly, "is inconceivable. But were it possible, were it to come to pass, there would be no limits to my gratitude."

Francia spoke in French:

"Mademoiselle," he said, "the morning grows hot. Your canoe waits. Let me conduct you to it."

## CHAPTER XXXIII

## CATARACTS

## (1)

ONE evening before mid-January Beltran sat with Francia over the cleared supper-table beneath the orange trees in the Palacio garden.

"You perfectly understand?" the Dictator queried.

"Entirely," Beltran replied.

"To make sure that you remember what I have said and that I have not forgotten something, I will go over it all again," said Francia.

"You will take as many men as you need, I leave the number as the choice of them to you. Be sure all are the right sort. They must not only be obedient, but reliable when out of sight. There must be no roughness. And they must be discreet, still-tongued fellows. It is most important that no one whatever be mishandled, not only not the principals, but no servant, no casual wayfarer. It must be done deftly and neatly. Likewise, absolute silence must be observed by all of them afterwards, you must impress that on them.

"Requisition Don Cipriano Doméque's family travelling carriage. The Velarde carriage may not be usable. Take Doméque's coachman; he is an unsurpassable driver.

"Go by the upper ford of the Rio Salado, otherwise I leave the choice of the route entirely to you.

"You will need not a little diplomacy. There must be no physical force used; they must be induced, not compelled. There again I depend upon your common-sense.

"Do not hurry them. Let them take reasonable time. And travel deliberately, neither too fast nor too slow.

"Bring them safe and as little angered as may be.

"I believe that is all.

"You perfectly understand?"

"Completely!" Beltran repeated. "But permit me to suggest one modification of the arrangements."

"What is that?" the Dictator asked suspiciously.

"Grandmother Juana," said Beltran, "has a travelling



carriage, though she has never used it since I began to remember. It is in good condition, for I had it thoroughly gone over and put in perfect order just after I came home. I can take that without requisitioning it, without anybody knowing it is out of the shed, not even *Abuela Juana*. If I requisition Don Cipriano's old rattle-trap, everybody will know it, for we cannot muzzle all the Doméque servants. I can borrow his coachman without causing any suspicions, on some pretext or other; I can think up the pretext between now and then. I think that will work smother."

"Good idea!" said Francia. "I agree. Do so."

(2)

The morning after Beltran, with sixty hussars conveying the Isquibel-Jaray travelling coach, had left Asuncion, a messenger from the Palacio entered Dr. Bargas' wine-shop, seeking "Don Tomas Parlett."

The little surgeon broke the seal of the missive and read aloud.

"Humph!" he grunted. "Listen to that! 'The Most High commands you to come and see him!' The cheek of the old boy! He wastes no politeness on me! Well, I suppose I must be on the move, or I'll be shot for tardiness at the Palacio, as I used to be birched for being late to school."

At the Government House he found Francia in a high good humour, for he not only received him ceremoniously, addressed him as "Señor Don Tomas" and invited him to be seated, after offering him snuff, but himself took three huge pinches in succession.

"Señor Don Tomas," he said, "am I right in considering you an adept at all kinds of surgery?"

"Excelentísimo Señor," Parlett replied, "you do me too much honour. I have been instructed in all branches of surgery, have watched, at the London Surgeon's College, operations of all sorts, am familiar with the procedure in all kinds of cases where surgical interference is warranted, have had experience as an assistant and afterwards as chief in nearly every variety of operations, and am more than moderately expert; but I do not call myself an adept at all departments of surgery. To be adept at one requires a

lifetime of devotion to that one specialty. I can hardly say I have made a specialty of any."

"Modesty aside," said Francia, "you are a surgeon of unusual breadth of experience and perfection of skill? Is not that the fact?"

"Excellency," said Parlett, "you do me too much honour! But I will say this: I would be regarded as better than the general run of surgeons and not far inferior to the best in any part of the world; and I do not believe there is my equal south of the Tropic of Capricorn in America, Africa or Australia, or afloat on the high seas."

"Enough!" said Francia. "And how are you on surgery of the eye? We all know your luck at finding *piqués* in pretty girls' eyes and effecting instantaneous relief, but how are you on the eye-department of actual surgery?"

"Ophthalmology," said Parlett, "was my favourite study, and I came nearer making a specialty of that branch of my art than of any other."

"Suppose," the Dictator said, "you were confronted with a case of blindness which, in your judgment, demanded surgical aid and promised a cure if operated upon; would you undertake it?"

"Yes and no," Parlett replied.

"You are not intelligible!" Francia rebuked him. "Be clear!"

"Your Excellency," the surgeon amplified, "I should undertake it, but not at once."

He stretched out his hand and regarded the finger-ends, Francia's eyes following his.

"See 'em tremble!" Parlett exclaimed. "I'm not fit to operate for a day or two, hand not steady."

"What will make it steady?" the Dictator enquired.

"Nothing is necessary, Excellency," said Parlett, "but rest and sleep, moderate food and a reasonable allowance of wine. I drink too much."

"What do you mean by a reasonable allowance of wine?" Francia queried.

"Why," said Parlett, "say a pint at dinner and another at supper."

"Would two days on that allowance make you fit to operate?"

"It should," Parlett gloomed; "but God knows, I've been soaked for months."

"A week should be enough," the Dictator hazarded.

"A week would put me fit enough for the most delicate operation ever performed by human skill."

"Can you ration yourself so rigidly for that length of time?" Francia demanded.

"God knows!" Parlett ejaculated again. "I could try; but I'm not sanguine of my self-control, I don't feel certain."

"Let us make certain!" Francia exclaimed. "Señor Don Tomas, consider yourself under arrest!"

Parlett's face went mottled.

"Not a word!" the Dictator warned him. "Not one word! Keep your seat, Señor Don Tomas!"

He called Bopî and sent for Lieutenant Ortellado. When he appeared, saluted and stood at attention, the Dictator said:

"Don Aquiles, listen attentively to me. I am about to entrust you with a delicate, though not difficult, commission. You are to take charge of Don Tomas here. He is to be under arrest only so far as I shall specify. Conduct him respectfully to his house. Search the entire house, out-buildings, *patio*, courtyard and yard—in short, the whole property.

"In this search you must not, except as I particularise, destroy, remove, injure or as much as disarrange any single article among the possessions of Don Tomas, not even the smallest or least valuable. Your search is to be directed solely to making sure that no wine, *chichá*, *caña*, *aguardiente*, cognac, cordial, or any other alcoholic drink, even in the smallest quantity, exists or remains on the premises. If any such liquids are found, you are to have them carefully carried away and sequestered under guard, to be returned undiminished to their owner when your period of guardianship ends.

"After you have made sure that not a drop of any intoxicating beverage, even to the mildest, remains stored or concealed anywhere on the premises, you are to make the doctor absolutely free of them. He is to move about in his own curtilage as he pleases; but if he attempts to cross the boundary lines of his property in any direction, you are to shoot him without mercy.

"You are to make sure that his servants treat him with every attention and respect, and that all his desires in the way of drink other than as I have particularised, and in respect to food of all kinds, are fully gratified. You are to admit to him any and all visitors who may wish to see him, but beware of letting a drop of wine or other drink be surreptitiously conveyed to him! Search every incomer carefully.

"You are yourself to have procured for him, from the wine-shop of Dr. Bargas, two pints of wine each day, of whatever sort he may himself prefer and select. You are to see that Don Tomas is given one pint each day with his dinner and one pint with his supper. If he drinks the pint, well and good. If he leaves any, see that it is consumed by some one else or poured out. Do not let any accumulate so that he may have the chance to drink more than a pint at any one time.

"Don Aquiles, I have selected you for this duty because of your excellent sense and fidelity. Be specially careful. If Don Tomas escapes, if he becomes intoxicated while under your care, you shall indubitably be shot. If he reports any incivility of yours or of any of your men, or if his visitors report any, you shall smart for it. The object of my arrangements is to bring the Doctor into the best possible condition of mind and body. If he is fretted or dissatisfied, my purpose will be thwarted. Do you perfectly understand?"

"I think so, Excellency," said Ortellado, "and I think I can give a good account of my commission and report Don Tomas in fine fettle when you call for him."

"Don Aquiles," Francia twinkled, "you are a man of sense."

Then he turned to Parlett.

"Señor Don Tomas," he said, "I have purposely given my orders in your hearing. They are devised with the object of having you in the pink of good form for a possible eye-operation. Are they well-conceived?"

"Damned well-conceived" growled Parlett.

"That is English, Señor Don Tomas," the Dictator said, "but I understood you."

"And I understand you, Excelentísimo Señor," Parlett retorted, "and better than you suppose. I'll put up with

my confinement and get my instruments in superlative condition for an operation if it comes to that. I am not such a fool as I look. I wasn't born last night. I go in training under duress, but as willingly as an old sot could. I'll be ready, and I won't fail you."

"That," said Francia, "is the way to talk!"

And he took a prodigious pinch of snuff.

(3)

Beltran made his dispositions for surrounding Estancia de San Bernardino as methodically and cautiously as if he were investing a fortress. The precautions proved wholly unnecessary. After his cordon had been formed and inspected, his two pickets on the lake-front and three on the roads to Altos, Atirá and Caacupé established, he deliberately approached the *estancia* with the travelling-coach and twenty cavalrymen. Leaving the carriage and its five horses just out of earshot with four troopers to watch it, he advanced with the rest to the mansion itself.

He found Ventura seated by her father under the corridor. Don Toribio sat, dejected and torpid, utterly unoccupied, not even smoking. He did not seem to have developed the acuteness of hearing usual in the blind, and gave no sign of being aware of the approach of seventeen horsemen.

Ventura stood up from her chair, a sort of icicle of fire, blazing with frigid wrath.

"You!" she cried, in French. "A henchman of the usurper! You have come to arrest us!"

"Mademoiselle," said Beltran laconically, "I am a soldier. I obey orders."

"Father," said Ventura in Spanish, "here is Don Beltran Jaray, come to visit us."

Don Toribio stood up, bowing.

"Señor Don Beltran," he said, "I am honoured. Your father was my good friend. My house is at your disposition. But, as you may behold, I am afflicted by the heavy hand of God. Your welcome, your entertainment, must devolve entirely upon my daughter, as I am unable to see."

He relapsed into his chair and apathy.

Ventura, still cold and scornful, beckoned Beltran to the end of the verandah. Standing there she said:

"Tell me your orders."

Beltran told the details of the injunctions laid upon him.

"I can be ready to set out by to-morrow morning," she said. "Will that be soon enough?"

"The day after, if you prefer," said Beltran gallantly.

"Best have it over with at once," Ventura concluded.

"Let it be to-morrow."

Don Toribio, when the matter was explained to him, remained wholly indifferent.

"A blind man," said he, "is a log, a lump, a breathing corpse. It matters not where I am, I cannot conceive of what use I can be to the nation or of what interest to the Dictator. But if he sends for me I go. If it be for the *patria*, I would endure any discomfort. If it be his order, I ask no questions; he is by law and right supreme. Let us make ready."

"Señor Don Beltran," said Ventura, "my father has placed our house at your disposition. Select what room pleases you and occupy it. I shall try to do my duty as a daughter and as a hostess. Dispose your men in the out-buildings at your discretion."

She remained cold and haughty, presided at dinner and supper with perfect courtesy, but without a flicker of kindness, and maintained her chilly distance during their journey to Asuncion.

The Velarde Mansion, a long, more or less rectangular congeries of buildings northeast of the Franciscan Monastery, they found open and ready to receive them. Francia had summoned to the Palacio the caretaker and had ordered him and his family to prepare the house at once for the reception of its master and mistress. He had also called in the services of Doña Juana Isquibel, who had already and at once divined the destination of her travelling carriage. She had had every cranny of the establishment thoroughly aired and cleaned after more than five years of total disuse, had put the furniture and utensils in the best of order and had even rooted out of Don Meliton Isasi's warehouse the cases Ventura had brought with her, and had their contents disposed about the house, including

a new German pianoforte, not greatly the worse for nearly two years of transportation and storage, with much sea air.

After the Velardes were settled in their town abode and had had one day's rest, a stream of callers poured into the house from early morning till the siesta hour, from the siesta hour until bedtime. Don Toribio, at first consistently, later obstinately, declined to receive any visitors. Ventura refused no one. Not only every friend she had in Asuncion called to see her, but she found herself fairly overwhelmed by overlapping visits from daughters of her mother's friends and from her merest and most distant acquaintances.

Doña Pancha Jovellanos had always been more or less hostile to her, and, after a dozen cattish innuendoes from her caller, Ventura could not resist remarking:

"I have had a great many visitors to-day. I had no idea I had so many friends. I am exceedingly flattered. I should have expected that we would be shunned, as having returned to the city under a sort of semi-arrest. Many of my visitors, I should have thought, would have been afraid to risk the Dictator's displeasure by calling on us."

"We were not left in the dark," chuckled her plump visitor. "El Supremo himself seems to have anticipated some such general state of mind. He forestalled any similar tendency by sending Gumesindo on a tour which included every household of any wealth or pretensions. He explained three-score times to every gentleman in Asuncion, as he did to Renato, that Don Toribio Velarde was under the special protection of the Dictator and enjoyed his favour to the highest degree; that if any one omitted to call upon him it would be regarded as a personal affront aimed at the Dictator. After your spectacular communion we needed no such explicit commands, we should have answered to the faintest hint. Everybody hastened to call on you. No one has failed to come."

Ventura's countenance displayed very mingled emotions. Surprise quickly effaced the rest.

"If that is true," she cried, "why has not Juanita been here? I have particularly missed Juanita."

"Don Manuel," Doña Pancha said, "was banished with

all his family more than six weeks ago. Five weeks ago yesterday they sailed in the *San José*."

"For Buenos Aires?" Ventura queried.

"No," Doña Pancha replied, "for Quarepoti."

"Up the river?" exclaimed Ventura. "Where were they banished to?"

"To Curuguatay," Doña Pancha told her.

"Why?" she asked.

"Why?" Doña Pancha cried. "Dear child, nobody asks why anybody is fined or imprisoned or banished or shot. They just are and that is all. No explanation is ever given, seldom any charge made."

Ventura fell very thoughtful.

When the flood of visitors had thinned to a trickle and run dry, Beltran called early in the morning, on official business, the servant said.

Ventura entered the *sala* frigidly and welcomed him ceremoniously, as a total stranger. He enquired formally after her father's health, and said:

"I have been sent to announce that El Supremo himself will visit Don Toribio this afternoon just after the siesta hour, riding round past here on his way to the suburban barracks. He will bring with him to examine Don Toribio's eyes, Don Tomas Parlett."

Ventura, her face expressing conflicting sensations, instantly shifted from Spanish to French.

"Parlett!" she cried. "The English surgeon? That chubby little toper?"

Beltran chuckled.

"Chubby," he agreed, "but no toper just at present."

He detailed Francia's precautions.

Ventura's cheeks flamed.

"He is in earnest," she exclaimed. "He really has hopes! He thinks there is a chance for Father!"

She sat and gazed at the parti-coloured floor.

(4)

Ortellado, with four dragoons convoying the surgeon, reached the Velarde mansion some time before Francia. Ventura received Parlett as if he had been an old friend



and chatted with him until one of the peons, who had been posted near the church of San Blas, ran in to announce that the Dictator's escort of lancers was debouching from the Plaza into Calle Comercio. Then she went out to persuade her father to come into the *sala*.

Francia put off ceremonial when he had dismounted at the *patio* gateway. He entered just as if he had been an ordinary caller. Don Toribio greeted him languidly and listened in silence while he explained why he had come.

When the august visitor paused his host developed unexpected opposition.

"God," he said, "has stricken me blind. It is his will that I remain blind. Were it his will that I see, I should have my sight. It would be blasphemous and sacrilegious to interfere with the will of God by surgery."

"The will of God," said Francia, "has given Don Tomas his knowledge and skill. To decline to avail yourself of Don Tomas is to reject impiously and presumptuously the good gifts of your Heavenly Father. The will of God has made me Dictator. I utter the will of God when I command you to submit to the ministrations of Don Tomas."

"Excelentísimo Señor," said Don Toribio, "you speak like an inspired prophet of God. I acquiesce. Do with me as you will."

"I speak," Francia growled, "like a man with common-sense. I am pleased that you are tractable. I should have been compelled to offer you the choice between putting yourself in the hands of Don Tomas and being shot as a rebel."

Parlett examined Don Toribio, questioned him and reported:

"Simple as a, b, ab! Easy as lying. I'll have him seeing this day week."

"Explain yourself," Francia commanded. "Be lucid; be intelligible!"

"Habit," said Parlett; "merely habit. Lifelong habit of a surgeon to give no explanations in the hearing of the patient. Generally it is a bad thing to do. The exception proves the rule; it is all right in this case. Don Toribio can hear all that I have to say, as there is nothing but encouragement in any of it.

"As far as I can see the trouble is merely cataract of

both eyes. He says he could still distinguish the daylight from darkness only six months ago; that a year ago he could make out vaguely a human form between him and the light, say at noon when he was in his chair under the verandah and a servant stood against the sky; that a year and a half ago, he could tell a man from a woman ten feet off. That argues that there is nothing wrong with the optic nerve or with the retina; that when we remove the cataracts by extracting the lenses we shall find all the other parts of the eye in normal condition, and sight will be completely restored. The popular notion about the incurability of cataracts originates mostly from the absence of surgeons competent to deal with them; the rest of it comes from the circumstance that in cataract cases of long standing, where the patient has been blind, say, ten years, the retina deteriorates from lack of stimulus, as no light falls on it. In such cases, even if the cataracts are successfully removed, the sufferer is hopelessly blind. If Don Toribio could tell day from night six months ago his retina has not yet lost any of its tone. He will see the moment the obstruction is out of the way and his eyes healed."

"You propose to remove the cataracts entirely?" Francia queried, meditatively.

"By extracting the lenses, as I said," Parlett replied.

"I thought," Francia said slowly, "that the usual practice was merely to push the cataracts out of the line of vision."

"That's couching," said Parlett; "you're correct. It is the fashionable device and prevalent method. I'll explain why. In the first place, extracting the lenses calls for far more deftness and skill from the operator. In the second place, the risk of suppuration is much less in couching, as the incision is only a small puncture. But couching is a clumsy, blundering operation at best and is really a questionable practice. I call it downright unsound practice. And these are my reasons:

"The couching needle has to be inserted in the white of the eye, the sclerotic, about three lines from the outer edge of the iris, of the coloured part of the eye. You can't insert it above or below, because of the likelihood of the lids pinching together convulsively and wrenching the needle. You can't insert it on the inside of the eye, because

the bridge of the nose is in the way. You have to insert it on the outside towards the temple. That is very close to the ciliary nerve, the tenderest point in the eye. I have heard a man of thirty, a healthy, resolute patient, scream with pain when a fool of an operator pierced the ciliary nerve. There's no sense in hurting a patient for nothing. It's just as easy to pick out the least sensitive part of the eye to cut into. That's what I do.

"Then, after your couching is performed successfully and the cloudy lens pushed downward and backward out of the line of vision, what have you done? Introduced a foreign body into the eye, for a lens out of place is a foreign body. What's the result? In two years, or at most three, the eye inflames, bursts or shrivels, and the victim is blind for life. Most surgeons care nothing for that certain up-shot. They perform the easy operation of couching. In five to ten days the eyes are healed, the patient can see. He is grateful. He pays well. Off goes the surgeon. When the trouble comes two or three years later no one guesses that it is the direct, inevitable sequel of a bad operation. It is thought of as a fresh visitation and the surgeon gets no blame.

"Now what do I do?

"I take a triangular knife, not a couching needle. The point of the knife is inserted not in the tender sclerotic, but in the cornea, the transparent portion over the coloured iris and black pupil. The cornea has hardly more feeling than one's finger nails, to which it is related in nature and structure. The sweep of the knife slits the cornea all across with a semi-circular incision along its upper margin close to the rim of the iris. Instantly laying down the knife, I take up a little instrument like a bit of fine wire with a tiny hook at the end. Inserting this in the incision, I tear open the capsule of the lens. Withdrawing the hook, I lay it down.

"I then squeeze the eyeball. Before operating I have treated the eye with what we call a mydriatic, a solution of nightshade, which causes the pupil to dilate to its utmost expansion. The moment I press on the eyeball the solid lens pops out through the dilated pupil and the incision. Then the other eye is operated on similarly. It requires very much less time to perform the operation than to tell

of it. As the cornea has little sensibility and the capsule none at all, the patient suffers less pain than from pricking his finger on a thorn. The eyes are bandaged. In five to eight days the bandages are taken off. The patient can see."

"But," Francia demurred, "how about the risk of supuration?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Parlett. "That is where Paraguay leads the world. With Guarani eye-lotion in which to dip my instruments and my hands, with which to bathe the eyes, with which to soak the pads and bandages, the risk of suppuration vanishes altogether."

"How long will it take," Francia queried, "to prepare the patient for the operation?"

"He's in splendid condition," Parlett declared. "All he needs is forty-eight hours of low diet. I'll operate the day after to-morrow, if the weather is fair; if not, the first bright day."

Don Toribio here spoke up.

"Señor Don Tomas," he said, "pardon me, but I am told that you are a heretic."

"I am," said Parlett shortly.

"Excelentísimo Señor," said Don Toribio, "it seems to me that a true son of the church should not place himself in the hands of a heretic without the presence and prayers of some priest."

Francia looked at Parlett.

"Priests," the little man exploded, "can do no harm. Have a dozen, if you like. Have the Bishop and the Vicar General and all four Priors. Only let them keep their distance and not pray too loud. I'll operate in the *patio*, on the shady side, early in the morning, so placing Don Toribio's chair and mine that we'll be just barely in the shadow; that'll give me the best light. You can assemble all the ecclesiastics of Asuncion, all the clergy of Paraguay, all the friars in the world, on the other side of the *patio*. They can't do any harm as long as they stand still and don't speak to me directly."

"Don Tomas," Francia smiled, "you may be sure no one will speak to you directly or otherwise interfere. For I myself mean to be present, to ensure you every protection. I shall not, however, sit on the other side of the *patio*.

But you may yourself designate the location you prefer for my chair."

"Excelentísimo Señor," said Parlett, "I appreciate your condescension and shall be greatly assisted by your presence."

"I comprehend," said Francia grimly.

Parlett winked.

He then gave directions to Ventura about the preparation of bandages and about her father's diet until the operation.

When he paused Francia said:

"Don Tomas, you may wait for me in the *patio*."

When the Dictator came out he asked:

"Has everything been provided for? Are you sure nothing has been forgotten?"

"Nothing has been forgotten," said Parlett, "but one further injunction should be given to Don Aquiles."

"What is that?" the Dictator queried.

"Tell him to let me have no wine at all from now until after I have operated on Don Toribio," said Parlett. "Tell him to make sure I don't even smell wine!"

Francia looked frankly astonished.

"I thought," he said, "that wine in moderation was beneficial."

"Don't you fool yourself," said Parlett. "Alcohol never helped anybody, except wretches perishing of cold or exposure. The smallest quantity impairs muscular efficiency."

"You are most unselfish, Don Tomas," the Dictator said.

"Not a bit," Parlett laughed nervously. "I'm only a good surgeon and a better doctor. I mean to make a success of that operation. That's pride in my craft. I know how. That's more than most men can truly say."

(5)

On the morning of the day set for the operation petitioners at the Government House found Beltran in the *patio*, in charge. Francia had early gone to the Velarde mansion.

There the street was gay with dragoons and hussars, Captain Garmendia and Lieutenant Ortellado in command. Inside the *patio* two of the priors, Padre Santiago and Fray,

Ignacio, were praying under the colonnade on the sunny side. Opposite them the largest and most ornate armchair in the house had been placed for the Dictator. He sat in it bolt upright, watchful and mute. Some thirty feet from him Parlett bustled about, directing the servants as to the location of the broad, low stool, on which Don Toribio was to be seated, and the small, high chair for himself. He had them placed, sat in the chair, eyed the edge of the shadow on the pavement, held up his hand and regarded his finger tips, conned the eaves all round the *patio*, stood up and ordered stool and chair moved, sat down over again, and surveyed the surroundings, repeated the whole series of actions, and kept it up until he was completely satisfied. Then he had a little table, the legs of which had been sawed off to make it just the proper height, placed most exactly in the handiest position, and on it disposed his instruments. His assistants, chosen from among the Velarde servants, were stationed where they could respond quickest when called on. He had selected them as intelligent and alert and had assigned to each one duty only.

After everything was prepared, Ventura led in Don Toribio, wearing only his low shoes, white silk stockings, red satin knee breeches and beruffled cambric shirt. When he was comfortably settled on the stool, Parlett said to Ventura:

"You are to be my chief assistant. You are cool and collected, have more sense than anybody else available, and more self-control. You are not the kind to faint or scream or get nervous. I know your sort. Stand until I say kneel, do just what I say, and nothing else."

Ventura nodded.

"Fetch that embroidery hoop and chamois skin," Parlett commanded.

Taking them from the servant who held them and speaking so that Don Toribio would be certain to hear, he said:

"I want to give you an idea, Señorita, of the perfection of my instruments and of how trifling will be the pain of this brief operation. You see this chamois skin is thin, but stout and strong. I have it stretched tight as a drum-head on this embroidery hoop. I take up the knife with which I am about to operate. Now observe what I am about to do. I set it point down on the level drum of chamois

skin. I do not let it drop on the drum, not even the smallest distance. I do not press on it, not the weight of a feather. Observe that of its own weight it pierces the chamois skin, passes entirely through it to the handle. You did not hear it; it made not the slightest noise. Look at the slash. It is as smooth as possible; not a sign of ragged edge. Just that smooth will be the incision in the eye; no tearing, no pain whatever. He'll hardly feel the incision."

"Señor Don Tomas," Don Toribio said, "be sure I shall not flinch."

"I am sure," said Parlett.

He lifted Don Toribio's lids, one by one.

"Fine!" he exclaimed. "The pupils are completely dilated."

He bathed each eye with Guarani eye-lotion, bathed his hands, dipped each instrument, and remarked:

"Now we begin."

He seated himself on the chair and instructed Ventura how to hold her father's head and keep the upper eyelid open.

Don Toribio made neither sound nor movement during his brief ordeal.

Before the priors realised that the operation was begun, it was ended, and both eyes bandaged over pads of lint soaked in Guarani eye-lotion.

"This day a week," Parlett said, "I'll begin to remove those bandages."

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### EMPRESS VENTURA

#### (1)

ON the momentous occasion of the final unbandaging there assembled in the *patio* of the Velarde mansion, as Parlett had ironically suggested for the operation, all four Priors, the Vicar-General, and the Bishop.

"At Asuncion," said Don Fray Evaristo de Panés, "the grace of God is manifested in a very special manner. We have seen miracles in Asuncion time and again. We may behold another to-day, by the mercy of heaven."

Francia put off his official bearing, as before, when he crossed the threshold. But at sight of the group of ecclesiastics, he partially resumed it, glaring at them in his most dictatorial manner.

When Don Toribio had been led forth and guided to his chair, Parlett turned from his comfortably seated patient and looked for Ventura.

"Place yourself directly in front of him," he commanded. "You should be the first object his eyes behold."

Ventura, corseted as always, and clad in a *tupoi* of corn-coloured silk, with a broad girdle of patriot's-blue satin, knelt before her father. Parlett, thereupon, made him sit up straighter. His chair was placed on the shaded side of the courtyard, half under its colonnade, and he faced away from the glare of the *patio*, towards the cool, dusky dimness of the shadowy wall. Ventura, kneeling before him, had the reflected light from the sky full on her uplifted face.

When Parlett had satisfied himself of the success of his operation and of the fitness of the eyes to be wholly uncovered, he completely removed the bandages, fitted on his patient a large pair of horn-bowed spectacles, and stepped aside.

"Now, open your eyes, Don Toribio," he said.

Ventura, her gaze riveted on her father's face, saw recognition in his look.

Don Toribio made an inarticulate sound, half exclamation, half sob, and then spoke.

"My precious girl; and more beautiful after nine years!"

Ventura half rose and they folded each other in a close embrace.

Presently, when Ventura, wiping her eyes, stood by her father's arm, Parlett beckoned the clergymen, who, in turn, came round under the colonnade so as to pass in front of Don Toribio. He recognised each joyfully and called each by name.

"A miracle indeed!" said the Bishop. "By the inscrutable will of our Heavenly Father we behold a miracle wrought by the hand of a heretic. Such are the mysterious dispensations of Divine Providence. Did I not say that at Asuncion the grace of God is manifested in a very special manner?"

Francia declined to pass in front of the patient.



"I know Toribio of old," he said. "No man is more punctilious or is dominated by more exacting instincts in matters of courtesy. In loyalty he yields to no Paraguayan. He would rise at the sight of me. Let him remain seated!"

He was about to depart when Ventura spoke.

"Excelentísimo Señor, may I have a few words with you in the *sala*?"

"Certainly, Señorita," the Dictator agreed, looking frankly astonished.

She led him into the big, dim room, and to an armchair on the *estrada*, seating herself in another by it.

Francia sat down without speaking.

"I wish to beg a favour," Ventura began.

"My impulse," Francia said, "is to reply 'granted' before uttered, but I have been so habituated to requests for favours involving my responsibilities to Paraguay, that I am constrained to content myself with asking you to state it."

"I implore you," Ventura said, "to recall from banishment Don Manuel Bianquet, and his innocent wife and children."

Francia's countenance, less inscrutable than usually, betrayed much feeling.

"I could refuse you nothing," he said, "not even were you to insist upon a flagrant violation of my duties as Dictator."

"I beg you to hear me out. If, after I have said my say, you repeat your request, I know I shall be weak enough to accede, however much I must despise myself for contravening the behests of my conscience."

"The circumstances are these. Don Manuel is a charming man. But he is a dishonest merchant. I heard rumours of his unfair dealing and warned him more than once. The rumours increased in frequency and in definiteness. Again I warned him. Then came positive evidence, unimpeachable evidence, accumulated evidence of many chicaneries. So nefarious, so infamous were his frauds that no punishment could be too severe. Bad as they were, had his victims been other merchants, I should have let him off with a reprimand. Such traders as Recalde and Jovellanos may look out for themselves for all I care, and should be able to fend for themselves. But Don Manuel sold all sorts of

misrepresented goods direct to labourers, peons, and their women. You know how tenderly I regard my Guaranies, you know how easily they are cheated, how heartless must be the scoundrel who victimises them. There could be no doubt concerning the long course of Don Manuel's rascalities.

"A native Paraguayan, for such swindling, I should have had shot without mercy. A Montevideano I had no wish to execute nor to cast into a dungeon. To put him in the public prison would merely be to lead up to his release on payment of a fine, for which he would recoup himself by redoubled impositions.

"The natural thing to do was to banish him to Corrientes and be rid of him. But in the course of his trading Don Manuel had become acquainted with many secrets of my administration. It would have been folly to set him free as an adviser to Perrichon, Artigas, Candioti and Alvear.

"I bethought myself of Curuguatay as a place from which escape is practically impossible, and as in real need of a trader to supply many wants of its inhabitants and the neighbouring *hacendados*. I gave Don Manuel notice of his banishment to Curuguatay. His wife petitioned to be allowed to accompany him with their children. That was her affair and his, not mine, and was her choice. Was I to refuse a faithful wife willing to share her husband's exile?

"Don Manuel is thriving in a small way upon steady trade at Curuguatay. And he is dealing honestly. So I am informed by both Comandante Robles and Father Yeguacá."

Francia paused.

Ventura stood up.

"I have nothing further to say," she breathed.

(2)

"Old Sour-Face," said Parlett to the assemblage, "is not such a bad sort when he is in a good humour."

Dr. Bargas agreed and so did Yegros and Bogarin.

"He sent for me," Parlett continued, "the very day after I took the bandages from Don Toribio's eyes.

“ ‘How much,’ says he, ‘do you mean to ask Don Toribio for curing his blindness? What fee do you expect for having restored his eyesight?’

“ ‘I hesitated.

“ ‘You want the very largest fee you can extract?’ he queried.

“ ‘Naturally,’ said I.

“ ‘Then take my advice,’ said he, ‘and you’ll never be sorry as long as you live. Go daily to his house to enquire for his health. Tell the servant to convey to him your compliments, but refuse to enter the house. When he sends for you to your own house, go at once to see him. When he asks you how much your fee amounts to, reply that you could not think of accepting payment from him, that it was a pleasure to serve him. The result will be more profitable to you than any cash fee you would venture to name.’

“ ‘I took Old Sour-Face’s advice. When I made that answer Don Toribio thanked me, looked pleased, offered me snuff, and then said:

“ ‘If you will not accept a payment for your skill, Señor Don Tomas, at least let me express my gratitude by offering you a small gift.’

“ ‘I bowed.

“ ‘He pulled out a drawer of his *bufete*, scooped up a double handful of doubloons and forced them on me, then another double handful of the same great gold pieces.

“ ‘Then more handfuls.

“ ‘I could hardly carry the stuff. I felt the weight of it weigh down my pockets.

“ ‘When I got home I counted two hundred and two doubloons. That’s thirty-four hundred and thirty-five *piastres*, *pesos*, dollars, whatever you call ’em. It comes to at least six hundred and sixty-six pounds, ten shillings, at the worst exchange bad luck ever could bring me. And if I have good luck I’ll cash in seven hundred and seven good golden guineas.

“ ‘Old Sour-Face certainly gave me good advice.’”

“ ‘The Marquess de Torretagle de Lima,’ spoke Dr. Bargas, “ ‘could not have advised you better.’”

“ ‘And the cash,’ said Parlett, “ ‘is not all, by a great deal. Every day the Velarde butler brings me the choicest delicacies from the market—game, fish and fruit. Almost

every day some servant brings me some present. I've a magnificent saddle and bridle, a Peruvian *vicuña* poncho, a silver-mounted fowling-piece, a sumptuous hammock, a silver service for six covers, a new water-jar, and a hundred others I forget. And Isasi tells me Don Toribio has commissioned both him and Zelaya to give orders to all their captains to ransack Montevideo and Buenos Aires for surgical instruments, especially French makes, and buy all they find for him to give me."

## (3)

For a week or more afterwards Francia was in a high good humour, approachable and gracious; constantly taking huge pinches of snuff. Then, as the south-west wind slackened, blew fitfully and variably, and finally died away, he became less affable, more haughty, and later stern and cold. As the wind veered to the north-east he waxed fidgety, fretful and irritable. From day to day he accorded interviews to fewer and fewer applicants; and they found him curt and savage.

Instead of watching the reviews with a smile and riding off after a word of warm approbation to Beltran, he began to interfere and break in with comments. After the change of wind made itself positively noticeable he found fault more and more from day to day. One afternoon he exploded into voluble wrath, rated the soldiers roundly, and ordered Beltran to subject the entire corps to an early drill the next day, keeping them hard at it till well on towards noon.

That morning he sat in his curule chair, busy with the papers on the small table under the colonnade of the empty outer *patio* in the Government House. Scarcely a petitioner had ventured to disturb him the day before; to-day he had told the guards to turn away all comers.

His face puckered over a great sheet of invoices, he was totally absorbed in his task, wholly oblivious to all else. Into his preoccupation a sound intruded: he seemed to hear a faint, a very faint, suggestion of approaching footsteps. Very faint indeed; not even Bopî's bare feet trod so noiselessly upon the worn bricks. As he became aware of the

sounds, before they distracted him from his employment, his unconscious reflections noted that the treads were not stealthy, but firm, yet each light as the fall of a petal from a flower.

Suddenly his intelligent consciousness became aware of what he was hearing. He looked up.

He stood up, startled, very erect, yet as if in the act of bowing.

Ventura was approaching him, already half way across the courtyard.

Also he noticed Fruela, her hands folded, standing meekly under the far colonnade near the entrance.

Ventura advanced unconcernedly, in the most matter-of-fact way, as if she had been calling on one of her aunts. She was corseted, wore a *tupoi* of a delicate pink dye with a belt of a very dark blue and had some pink flowers in her hair.

Gazing at her, Francia made a deep obeisance, greeted her ceremoniously, and bowed her to her chair.

Seating himself, he said:

"You should not have come here."

"Should not!" Ventura exclaimed. "I brought Fruela with me; it is broad morning daylight! I am a free Paraguayan, and all citizens of the republic have the right of access to its executive chief!"

He was plainly staggered, and asked:

"How did you get in?"

"The sentry," replied Ventura, "passed me in without hesitation."

Francia made an inarticulate exclamation of astonishment.

"You are obtuse," Ventura calmly told him.

"Any of your sentries would pass me; any one of them would have done so at any time, since the third mass the Sunday after I came up the river. Your stolidest Guarani has wit enough for that kind of inference."

"You embarrass me!" the Dictator exclaimed.

"It is I," said Ventura, "who should be embarrassed."

"And you are not?" Francia cried.

"Not a particle," she said. "I have passed through all stages of conflict with myself and am imperturbably at peace with all the world."

"Why did you come?" he queried.

"You did not come to me," she said; "I waited. You did not come. So I came to you."

"But why?" Francia exclaimed.

Ventura flushed crimson.

"My father is all bustling enjoyment of life. He is like a lad. He has guests to dinners and *tertulias*; he rides horseback daily. He is completely restored to sight and activity."

Francia stared at her without a word, petrified.

She went dead pale under his gaze, her eyes full on his.

Then, as the silence lengthened, she blushed from the glossy black hair above her high forehead to the gold-thread fringe at the low neck of her *tupoi*.

"I said there would be no limits to my gratitude," she uttered huskily. "There are none."

Francia's face turned a dull red-brown and then paled again.

He stood up, bowed, reseated himself and, leaning forward, spoke hoarsely:

"Señorita, will you be my wife?"

"Yes," Ventura enunciated.

Francia sat back in his chair, limp from his carefully powdered hair to the square toes of his gold-buckled low shoes. Inside his blue, gold-laced general's coat, buff-corded breeches and white silk stockings, he suddenly seemed flaccid and boneless.

"I am astonished!" he half whispered. "I am bewildered!"

"Both conditions," said Ventura, almost smiling, "equally misbecome a prospective bridegroom or the absolute ruler of a nation."

Francia sat bolt upright, entirely himself. He cackled a nervous laugh.

"Neither a lover nor a Dictator," he said, "is proof against lightning, and both alike may be thunderstruck. I am astounded. I cannot credit my senses! This is too good to be true."

He looked all about the courtyard. Save for Fruela, ignorant of any tongue except Guarani, and totally out of ear-shot where she squatted patiently under the far colon-

nade, the *patio* was wholly deserted; they were entirely isolated.

His eyes came back to her face and fixed upon it.

"You love me?" he asked.

"Love," said Ventura evenly, "is too much to expect. I mean to marry you; be content with that."

Francia's habitually pale countenance whitened to a chalky lead-grey.

"You do not love me!" he cried. "I decline to hear any further talk of marriage between us. I refuse any such sacrifice on your part."

Ventura gazed at him, wide-eyed and unwinking.

"It does not at all become any man who has proposed marriage to a woman and been rejected," she said, "to spurn the same woman, offering herself to him voluntarily within the same month."

"Offering herself!" Francia echoed. "You shock me, Señorita. You and I are unconventional, un-Paraguayan, un-Spanish. But this goes beyond all bounds of custom, even of the customs of England or America."

"Converts," Ventura calmly argued, "whether of religion or manners commonly outdo their models. I am no exception."

"I refuse to accept any such sacrifice of yourself," he asseverated.

"Sacrifice!" Ventura repeated after him. "I should not call it a sacrifice. I am not sacrificing myself. I do not love any other man. That I do not love you will not make marrying you a sacrifice of myself. I have heard of many happy marriages in England and America, marriages entirely voluntary on the part of the wife, where a woman wedded a man for whom she felt no love whatever, but whom she respected, esteemed, appreciated, and admired. I have heard of not a few such marriages in which the wife came to love her husband genuinely and fervently. If a woman must daily and hourly, even in spite of herself, approve her husband's acts, commend his discernment, acclaim his wisdom, and reverence his character, she inevitably, however gradually and imperceptibly, comes to idolise the man himself."

"And when a man," said Francia, "is utterly in love with a woman and must also extol her intellect and eulogise

her eloquence, he covets her all the more. You are a persuasive speaker, a convincing pleader. I cannot but yield; I am not strong enough to resist. Yet I seem to recall an aphorism of an English Countess, about loveless marriages. Did you not quote to me such an apothegm?"

"I did," Ventura admitted. "It was Lady Baxendale's. When one of her daughters, asked in marriage by the son of a Marquess, declared that she considered friendly respect quite sufficient as a basis for married happiness, that she saw no impediment to happiness on that basis, her mother said:

"'Ah, my dear, there is always the other man.'

"Now that is just the point in our case. There is no other man. And I may say there never has been. Of course, I thought I was in love with Vicente Lopez; every girl that ever saw him adored him at first sight. But that was a mere girlish infatuation, and Vicente, rest his soul, has been dead seven years. And there is one more point: My feeling for you is much warmer than friendly respect."

"And I," Francia quoted, "oppress Paraguay, have stained my hands with innocent blood, have been a traitor to my kind, have denied my God."

"Oh," Ventura cried. "You ignoramus philosopher, you erudite blockhead, you unconscionable dunce! You may know more than any man alive about eclipses and finances, Latin and Greek, law and policy. But of women you know nothing! About women you are a dolt! Venancio Lopez could school you. Can't you comprehend what you ought to have known from boyhood, that when a woman is angry she utters the most cutting taunt that comes into her head, regardless of whether it is true or not?"

"Then you did not mean all that and the rest?" Francia queried.

"You clod!" Ventura exclaimed, "of course I meant it. A woman means anything she says when she is angry. I meant it with every tingling shred of me. But when I had thought it over, since I have thought it over, after my father's restoration, I found that I did not really feel what I had hurled at you. I do not feel it."

"Thank you for the assurance," Francia said, bowing. There was a momentary silence.

Slowly the Dictator smiled.



"I have always deferred," he said, "to adepts in departments of knowledge by me unexplored, I have always endeavoured to learn from them what I could. But I have not found masculine experts so contemptuous of unschooled neophytes. I hope to find you less intolerant of my ignorance in countless matters relating to women."

Ventura smiled.

"In most," she said, "I imagine you shall."

There was another silence.

Francia spoke first.

"I fancy," he said, "that the best method of procedure will be for me to ask you of your father with all the customary traditional formalities without any reference to my official position, as if I were, say, one of the Casals."

Ventura nodded.

"And now," said the Dictator, "I beg you, Señorita, to make me a promise."

"What is it?" Ventura queried tonelessly.

"I ask you," Francia said, "not to visit me here again."

Ventura reflected.

"I am not willing," she said, "to pledge myself to that without qualification. But I promise not to come here except under circumstances which would bring any Paraguayan here as a petitioner."

Francia bowed.

(4)

Don Toribio displayed an independence wholly unlooked for. He received Francia's overtures precisely as they were made, just as if he had been any wealthy or well-to-do gentleman.

"I shall need time for consideration, Señor Don Gaspar," he said. "If you will return to-morrow or any later day at this hour I shall be able to be more definite."

Again accompanied by Beltran, Francia returned the next day as unaffectedly as if he had been a simple advocate. It was Don Toribio who brought up the question of his official position, and that at the beginning of the interview, as soon as the greetings and compliments were over.

"I have considered the matter as thoroughly in a day,"

he said, "as I should be likely to do in a year. I have also consulted Ventura. A being who has travelled as she has is not to be disposed of like any ordinary girl with no mind of her own. She tells me she is entirely willing to marry you. I also am entirely willing for her to marry you."

Francia bowed.

"It only remains then," he said, "to settle the date of the wedding."

"That," Don Toribio said, "is a point that will require much cautious discussion."

"Why so?" queried Francia, astonished.

"Bear with me, Señor Don Gaspar," said the former blind man, his eyes on the Dictator's. "I must choose my words carefully, I must approach the point gradually. Do not be impatient, I beg, nor incensed."

Francia bowed.

"The matter presents itself to me thus," Don Toribio continued. "I desire to see my daughter happy and permanently happy, in so far as there can be any permanency in human affairs. We cannot control the uncertainties of life; many of them we cannot foresee. But some of them we can foresee and avoid. And to some extent we can judge the future by the past.

"You recall, as I do, many marriages in Espinosa's time where the bride mated with every prospect of a long life of affluence and conjugal felicity and, within a year, saw herself an exile to some half-savage hamlet, her husband a pauper, stripped of his entire patrimony. Many others were as undeservedly widowed and left entirely wretched. Such were the uncertainties of life for the wealthy and noble under Don Lazaro's tyranny. No man could predict what his caprice would lead to. A man secure of life and property one day might be the next a beggar, his estates confiscated, and, before night, a corpse.

"Now, bear with me, Señor Don Gaspar, and be not incensed.

"No man can predict what a convention of representatives of all Paraguay will vote, nor its caprices. You are to-day more absolute in this republic than any ruler in any other country. Your power and popularity seem secure. There is every probability that next May you will

be unanimously proclaimed Supreme and Perpetual Dictator, absolute for life.

"But there is just a bare possibility that events may take some wholly unexpected turn, that the convention may not act as we forecast, that its vote may relegate you to private life. Bear with me, Señor Don Gaspar. You have approached me in this matter not as an autocrat of Paraguay, but as any man asking any man's daughter. I reply in the like spirit. We Velardes are the wealthiest and noblest Paraguayans. A Velarde's daughter should mate fittingly. As Dictator of Paraguay you are the best match in the republic.

"But suppose Ventura finds herself within a year wife of a mere ex-Dictator, of a simple advocate. Her share of the Velarde wealth would indeed enable you two to live in affluence. You would suffer no miseries like the impoverished victims of Espinosa's confiscations. But as ex-Dictator you would be the target of all the pent-up hatred, spite and venom accumulated against you among those envious of your exaltation or thwarted by your integrity. You could hardly escape exile, assassination or execution. Am I to see my daughter a widow before she is twice a mother?

"Weigh all these considerations, Señor Dan Gaspar. I observe, with pleasure, that you pay me the deference to listen in silence to all these unpalatable utterances. Am I laying too heavy a load on your patience when I ask you to postpone the fixing of the date for the wedding until after the dispersal of the impending convention?"

(5)

No one had overheard Ventura's talk with Francia at the Palacio, nor had any eavesdropper caught any word of the two interviews between Toribio and the Dictator. Yet the gossip of the city made a fairly accurate conjecture of the facts. It was the general rumour that Francia and Ventura were to be married after the convention if the Dictator's authority was confirmed and made permanent.

Ventura immediately eclipsed Beltran as Beltran had

eclipsed Hawthorne, and became the focus of all the intrigues, adulation and sycophancy of the capital, and also the target of its insinuations, innuendoes, defamation and scurrility.

Every toady in the city hastened to curry favour with Don Toribio; every woman fawned upon Ventura. Don Toribio enjoyed his position, accepted ironically the gifts thrust upon him, and revelled in the play of wit with which he veiled his contempt under thanks flawlessly worded. Ventura was frankly disgusted and surfeited with adulation and cajoleries and found a sort of relief in Doña Pancha's cutting sarcasms and in Doña Juana's blunt directness.

Throughout Asuncion she was the staple topic of discussion with all classes. She was credited with unlimited influence with Francia. It was not so much that he was to marry that impressed the imagination of the people of Asuncion, though that mere fact was inexpressibly startling to all; what struck everybody with amazement was that he was willing to wait until after the convention. That convinced high and lowly alike of her incredible ascendancy over him. The aristocracy nicknamed her "Empress Ventura," the rabble, "the almighty *vupoi*." If any one had any doubt of her domination it was obliterated by two spectacular occurrences not long after Francia's acquiescence in Don Toribio's views.

One afternoon the Dictator was riding back to the Palacio from the daily review at the suburban barracks. His horse proceeded at a slow walk, his rider's head bent over his left shoulder against the strong north-west wind. As usual Francia rode in a circuit predictable by no man. It led him past the house of Don Pascual Echagüe. A white spot on the house wall, near the far corner, beyond the last window, caught the Dictator's eye. He swerved to that side of the roadway, saw a sheet of paper, as it were a hand-bill, affixed to the wall, and manœuvred his horse close up to it, until he could read it.

What he read was:

"Our snarling jaguar, by caprice of fate,  
 Senile and mangy, yet has found a mate  
 To humor him whom all good women hate.

"We thought that she, though jeered by gods and men,  
Already would be sharing his foul den,  
We see a marvel much beyond my pen.

"He waits, whereas we trowed this law-dragon  
Would marry quickly, have his wedding soon,  
Promptly as once he ordered mass at noon.

"His blood with youthful ardour in a blaze,  
He whom all opposition used to craze  
Submits to long indefinite delays.

"What sorcery has brought to pass this freak?  
What magic made him patient, mild and meek?  
The answer is not very far to seek.

"You ask what makes him tardy to enact  
The ceremony? That is easy tracked.  
He waits but in appearance, not in fact."

His lancers, in talking the incident over later among themselves, unanimously agreed that they had thought they had known El Supremo angry and wrathful, had even seen him rabid; but that they realised they had never seen him more than mildly irritated, comparing all his past outbursts of rage with the fury he exhibited after reading that placard. The sight of his face when he looked back at them turned them numb.

He barked an order.

Six leapt from their horses and burst into the house. Almost at once they returned, haling among them Don Pascual Echagüe. Up to the poster they dragged him. To it Francia pointed.

"Señor Don Pascual," he queried, now cold as ice, "how came this lampoon on your house-wall?"

"I do not know," stammered the fainting don.

"A lie!" snapped the Dictator. "Off with him to the *cuartel*."

Very early in the morning two days later Bopî announced to Francia a lady halted by the sentry at the gate of the Palacio.

"Admit her," growled the Dictator.

There approached him a personable matron whom he

knew he should recognise, but whom he could not, for the life of him, identify.

He stood up ceremoniously and greeted her graciously: "Be seated, Señora."

After he had also sat down he asked:

"What, Señora, is your desire?"

At that the lady burst into tears, and, with clasped hands, knelt before him, dragging herself towards him as she sobbed, exclaiming:

"Mercy, Excellency, mercy!"

"Mercy for whom?" Francia queried, irritated and embarrassed, for he abominated such intercessions.

The poor lady could only sob.

"My husband! My husband!"

"What ails your husband?" Francia enquired testily.

"He is in the public prison," she managed to utter, between sobs. "He is fettered with a *barra de grillos*. He is ill. He will die."

"That is the fault of those fools Narvaez and Sabola," Francia replied. "I'll send Dr. Parlett and have him looked after properly. Who is your husband?"

"Don Pascual Echagüe," she answered, more distinctly.

"Don Pascual Echagüe!" the Dictator thundered.

"Were you Melchora Jovellanos?"

"I was," Doña Melchora replied.

"Zorilla!" Francia called, in his fiercest voice.

Zorilla came instant.

"Go to the *cuartel*," the Dictator commanded, "and rivet a second *barra de grillos* on that scoundrel Echagüe."

Doña Melchora burst anew into sobs, wailings and beseechings.

"Seize that crazy woman!" came the second order.

Zorilla summoned two soldiers, who clutched her, one by each arm.

"Hearken!" spoke Francia sternly. "Each time you dare to intrude yourself upon me an additional *barra de grillos* shall be riveted upon your husband.

"Take her away! Put her out!"

Doña Melchora never knew how she reached her home. Reach home she did, more dead than alive. There she found her sister-in-law, Doña Pancha Jovellanos, who at sight of

her put off her habitual acerbity and became tender and helpful. When she had elicited her story she said:

"The first thing for you must be *maté*, food and rest. In this condition you can do nothing. Then we must go see Ventura, which is what you should have done yesterday."

Consequently, shortly before his dinner hour, Francia beheld Ventura enter the courtyard.

He greeted her with ceremony and, she noted, with agitation which he endeavoured to hide beneath an attempt at jocularity, asking when both were seated:

"And are you here, Señorita, as a free citizen of a free republic?"

"I am here," she spoke resonantly, "as your possible future wife."

Francia rose, bowed profoundly, reseated himself, and asked, in a most serious tone:

"And on what errand?"

"My errand," she said, "might indeed be that of any citizen of a free republic. I come to demand mere justice for an innocent man imprisoned."

"And who is this guiltless victim?" the Dictator queried, a hint of his evil snarl in his tone. "And what is the mere justice you demand for him?"

"Gaspar," said Ventura, and saw him thrill at the form of address, "unless you deal with me fairly, without sarcasm or covert sneer, I leave you at once and you shall never see my face again, alive or dead."

Francia sprang up, chalky pale, and sat down again as hastily.

"Señorita," he said solemnly, "whoever else may or may not be such, I certainly am now an innocent victim. I am guiltless of sneer or sarcasm towards you."

"You are so habituated," Ventura told him, "to servility and cringing, that the first hint of opposition brings into your voice and the wording of your utterances a malignant jeer which is all the worse if wholly unconscious."

"I shall not offend again," he assured her; "at least, not against you. What prisoner do you wish released?"

"Don Pascual Echagüe," Ventura stated.

Francia did not spring up, but his demeanour expressed amazement more vividly than would have any movement.

"This," he exclaimed, "is the forbearance, the mildness, the magnanimity of the saints, of the angels. You intercede for your detractor! As a lover, as a man, I applaud; but as a ruler, I must beg of you not to press your request, but to withdraw it as you did with that for the Bianquets. It is not public policy that so vile a slanderer, so detestable a libeller, so hideous a calumniator should not suffer the severest just penalty of his misdeeds. I was tempted to have him shot, to cast him into a dungeon. I reflected that imprisonment in fetters would be punishment severe enough——"

"Hardly severe enough," Ventura interrupted, "had he been guilty. But I intercede for him not as a meek saint for a forgiven enemy, but as a clear-headed, practical woman for a manifestly innocent man; and I press my suit and shall press it."

"What?" Francia cried. "You call him innocent? This abominable defamer of so noble a woman as yourself, this publisher of lampoons? You call him innocent, you plead for him?"

"Innocent he indubitably is," Ventura maintained, "and I plead not less for you than for him. When you are calm you are the justest man alive; when you are angry you are as irrational as a cross baby. You have not an atom of proof of Don Pascual's guilt, and much of his innocence."

"What composer of a pasquinade so envenomed against you and so dangerous to its author would affix it to the wall of his own dwelling? What countless chances any one from Venancio Lopez to El Zapo would have for posting a paper on anybody's wall! What watch does any one in lazy Asuncion keep over his street-wall during the siesta hour? When did plump old Pascual, in all his life since childhood, have wit enough for so biting an epigram?"

"You think you are vindicating justice and me and the cause of law and order. You are advertising to high and low a bit of vilification best forgotten, which would have gained no currency but for your action, whereas now every one who has read the verses and remembers them repeats them to all and sundry. Thus you hurt me instead of protecting me. You are making Paraguay and government and law and justice and yourself ridiculous."

"Do real justice, act with real perspicacity. Release



Don Pascual and let the matter blow over and be forgotten."

Francia's countenance expressed a mingling of astonishment, scalded vanity and unwilling admiration.

"Señorita," he said, "I have always held that a wife with brains, with a cultivated intellect, with a mind of her own, would be of incalculable value to any public man, and especially an absolute ruler. I perceive that I am right. I foresee for Paraguay long years of inflexible strictness from me tempered by advice from your sensible mildness.

"In this case you have completely won me over, both heart and mind, for you have expressed or implied arguments entirely convincing to my reason. Your request is just.

"But before you depart to release the man I have hastily and unintentionally wronged, give me leave to say to you that I tremble at the results for Paraguay should you press upon me petitions for unjust or unadvisable indulgences, based upon whim or mere sentiment. In this case I accord what I approve. But I feel myself utterly weak before you. I should accord you anything, however much I disapproved of it. I realise that I know you will never abuse your power over me, but I tremble for Paraguay if you ever should. It is well for any man to be in love; it is not well for an autocrat to love abjectly. You could wheedle me into authorising what would be contrary to my reason, my conscience, my desires, my instincts. I know, Señorita, you will use your dominance for the good of both of us, as for the good of all Paraguay. But be reverent in the exercise of your sway. For I could refuse you nothing, nothing, nothing. Never forget that. I must grant any request of yours, however unconscionable the request might be, however quixotic the granting of it. I could refuse you nothing."

Trembling with conflicting passions, he turned to seize pen and paper and scribble an order.

Naturally, after his exaltation of soul had quieted, the reaction from his outburst of noble sentiments left him even more than usually irritable. As he returned from the barracks a wretched mongrel managed to get trampled under his horse's hoofs and set up a hideous yelping. At the Palacio he called Zorilla and reprimanded him, saying that

a new generation of dogs could not have matured since his last order to rid the streets of them, and berating him soundly for his negligence.

Hawthorne had never narrated to any one Zorilla's discomfiture, nor had the chagrined lieutenant ever mentioned it to anybody, for he feared Hawthorne even more than he hated him. Now, recalling his humiliation, he resolved to spare no one's pet and promised himself complete gratification of his love of cruelty.

Next morning, during the brief period of comparative coolness lingering after sunrise, Ventura was indulging in one of the habits she had learned in England and Massachusetts, and, accompanied only by Fruela, was enjoying an almost brisk walk through the lanes to the southward of the Convent of Mercy. As she neared a cross-lane she heard loud and angry voices. The tall cactus hedges prevented her seeing anything, and the babel of shouts was unintelligible. She had no inkling of what she was to see when she rounded the corner and came upon a bevy of soldiers, their dirty, whitish trousers flapping about their bare ankles, yelling at an old gentleman who knelt in the roadway, his arms clasped about two beautiful Malvinas pointers. On either side they snuggled to him; he had a protecting arm round the neck of each. Kneeling on one knee he faced his tormentors, his decent black suit dusty, his long silvery hair dishevelled about his chalky, pale countenance, desperate but brave.

Ventura knew him for the ex-Intendente.

At the same instant she heard Zorilla command:

"Seize him! Pull the dogs from him."

Like a deer Ventura darted among the ruffians. Before their momentary hesitation had let them obey the order, she had spread the skirt of her *tupoi* over the old man and his pets.

"What does this mean?" she demanded.

Zorilla cringed.

"El Supremo has decreed that the streets be cleared of all vagrant curs," he explained.

"And you misinterpreted the decree as a license to you to butcher the valuable hunting-dogs of a respected nobleman?" she hurled back at him.

"Oh, very well, Señorita," Zorilla deprecated, "let him

keep his dogs. Let him keep his dogs." And he added in Guarani:

"Come, fellows."

"Halt!" cried Ventura, in Spanish.

"You know me; disobey me if you dare. You have misused and insulted a Spanish gentleman. You are neither a Spaniard nor a gentleman, and cannot, if you would, apologise as a Spanish gentleman deserves. But unless I see and hear you make the best and completest apology of which you are capable, make it here and now and aloud, make it both in Spanish and in Guarani, as sure as I am speaking to you, you shall be executed before noon to-morrow."

Zorilla shot at her one glance of baffled, impotent hate, and then made as full and graceful an apology, in flowery Guarani and in courtly Castilian, as even Ventura could ask for.

The tale of this incident was told in every household in the city. If anything it made more of an impression than had the release of Don Pascual Echagüe.

**BOOK IV**  
**BELTRAN**



## CHAPTER XXXV.

### GAUCHOS

#### (1)

ON Hawthorne and his escort rode, at the utmost speed to which they dared urge their mounts, at a steady gallop, along the innumerable, ever-branching, crooked paths broken by the cattle of which they never caught a glimpse, sometimes down into a dry water-course and out again on the other side, mostly over almost perfectly level plains; around them the waving plumes of the pampas-grass or the nodding purple blooms of league-broad thistle-ries, over whose breeze-bowed tops they could barely look when standing up in their stirrups, nothing else in sight save the hot, shimmering, pampas-horizon away and away all to their left and the imperceptibly nearing and lifting blue line of the low Cordillera de Maracayú to their right; above them the cloudless, speckless, dark-blue sky.

The sun was visibly declining when Lopez shouted and pointed. Hawthorne, staring through the heat haze, discerned first one and then another and another king-vulture, moving in vast, slow circles far up in the air, the merest black dots against the firmament. Later he made out a flock of ordinary vultures below them, but even so barely discernible, so high they wheeled and soared. Gazing still in the direction of this winged convocation, he became aware of a titanic sable cloud-column, as of smoke from a fierce conflagration, only it swayed and eddied without any sign of an upward current and showed not blurred and dull but sparkling, jetty black against the sun rays. Towards this portent they galloped now, Lopez setting the pace, without care how they pressed their horses.

Topping a slight rise, one of the long, easy swells of the plain, Hawthorne caught a glimpse of a low house or hut above which the strange column of bright blackness pointed towards the sleepy vultures in the upper air.

With a shock of surprise, certainty and repulsion Haw-

thorne suddenly realised that the sable shaft against the sky was a great cloud of flies.

A hint of breeze breathed against their faces and brought with it an intolerable stench.

Riding clear of the thistles and tall grass into a cropped and trampled space maybe a half mile across, Hawthorne saw plain the low, mud-walled, sod-roofed dwelling, its doorless doorway and shutterless window leering blackly at him, beyond it the ample horse-corral of tall, slender stakes interlaced with raw-hide ropes, and all around both a wide circle of ox-bones, ox-skulls, ox-skeletons, white and bleached, of ox-heads still showing bits of hide, and among them skeletons not yet picked bare, and a dozen or more carcasses in every stage of putrefaction, a horrid ring of putrescence and decay.

Through this abomination they rode to the hut. In its yawning doorway appeared a stocky woman, bare-foot, bare-armed, bare-headed, bare-bosomed, clad in a short-sleeved homespun gown; then beside her a girl, nearly as tall, but slender, and similarly half-clad. From behind and between them swarmed out seven children; the tallest boy a half-grown urchin, wearing a *chiripá* and poncho; the others, as the three little girls, naked as they were born. Around the house rode two Gauchos, a big man and a full grown lad, wearing spurs, *botas de potro*, ample, shaggy ponchos, and broad-brimmed, close-crowned felt hats. Both bestrode flea-bitten roans, always a Gaucho's choice; each carried a lasso in front of his high-peaked saddle.

Greetings were exchanged.

The Gaucho's name was, characteristically, Veremundo Cabral, but he spoke Spanish and was lumpishly well-disposed. He shouted to his son, who set spurs to his horse and galloped off. Cabral, like all of his kind, no more thought of asking the strangers to dismount than he would have dismounted himself; he hitched his right knee over his saddle-bow, ready for leisurely conversation until sunset.

The woman, however, suggested that the strangers might be thirsty and their horses hungry; whereupon her husband was instantly all courtesy and solicitude, the native Peninsular graciousness appearing most striking in so swarthy, hairy and unkempt a giant. After the girl had handed each a cow-horn of water, the soldiers went off with Cabral

to picket the horses, while Hawthorne and Lopez entered the house.

It was of one room, mud-floored, raftered with rough poles, mere sapling-trunks, and had two staring windows on the side opposite the window and door. The beds were hide stretchers and besides these the house had for furniture a dozen ox-skulls, used for stools, a tall, hogshead-like water-jar of red earthenware, a rack loaded with saddles and other horse furniture, and, hanging from pegs on the mud-walls, several cow-horns fitted with lid-covers, a number of iron spits, and a copper *maté*-kettle shaped like a big tankard.

A small *maté-tercio* lay in one corner and a tobacco-*petacon* in another.

Hawthorne and Lopez seated themselves on skulls, and drank more of the water which the tall girl offered until they had had their fill.

The woman, staring at Hawthorne, asked if he was a *medico*. When he replied that he had no knowledge of surgery, but could sometimes remedy diseases which did not require the knife, she told him a long story of her sufferings from headaches and asked his help. Hawthorne, mindful of Azara, looked at her hands and considered. Finally, after a long interval of reflection, he instructed her to cut her finger-nails and to bathe her feet well and carefully, then to lie abed for at least two days and nights. Her pain should then abate.

Presently the soldiers returned, their host with them, and, just as they approached, a shout from behind made them wheel about.

The lad was galloping up, urging before him a frantic bullock which he had lassoed over its horns. Ten yards from the house he threw the beast by a dexterous wrench of the hide-lasso. Instantly Cabral, who had run forward at the shout, stabbed the victim through the ribs with his sheath-knife.

Then, while Cabral and the lad cut into the slain bullock, the children raked the ashes from a covered bed of coals some yards from the door, piled on it pampas-grass-stems and thistle-stalks, and soon had a roaring fire. Standing to windward of this they roasted, on long spits, strips of the belly-meat of the bullock,



which the Gauchos esteem the best part of a beef, also chunks of the inside of the hind legs and of the back-muscles, when they found that the strangers preferred those portions.

After the outside of the meat was roasted they offered spit and all to one or the other of their guests, who each gnawed off the outside and then roasted the remainder further to his liking.

Sunset found the soldiers not yet replete, though Hawthorne, and soon after him Lopez, had been surfeited some time before; as, in the midst of all that charnel, assailed by the sight of the carcasses, choked by the stench of them, and assaulted by the myriads of blow-flies, even tired travellers could feel little appetite.

When the stars came out the Gaucho gracefully declared that his house was wholly theirs. He, with his family, lay down under the open sky, only raw-hides between them and the bare ground, only their ponchos over them, leaving their dwelling to their guests. Two of the soldiers preferred to sleep similarly in the open, two lay on the floor of the hut, two took the vacant stretchers after Hawthorne and Lopez had composed themselves on those of their choice.

As the hosts were far out of earshot and, besides, all snoring audibly, and as the soldiers spoke only Guarani, Hawthorne and Lopez conferred in Spanish before they slept.

After some exchange of opinions as to the condition of the men and horses and of views as to their procedure on the morrow, they tried to slumber. The soldiers, like the residents, were noisily asleep already. Lopez, almost as much as Hawthorne, was restless in the midst of the foulness about them, oppressed by the stench and tormented by the mosquitoes.

"How can people live among such horrors?" Hawthorne exclaimed irritably. "How can they endure the smell? How do they ever grow up?"

"They are inured to the stink," Lopez rejoined placidly. "They are born in it, and they never notice it. They are too lazy to kill a beef any further from their fire than they must. So they live out their lives in this festering decay. All Gaucho homes are like this."

"I read about them in Azara," Hawthorne remarked

drowsily. "But I did not realise how disgusting they must be until now."

At the first light of dawn they were roused by the flies that swarmed over their faces, crawled into their nostrils, boomed and buzzed in their ears. They had another meal of scorched beef and made ready to be off.

Hawthorne proposed that Cabral supply them with two fresh horses and guide them over the Cordillera.

At first the Gaucho listened sullenly. Presently his wife, who had been listening from a respectful distance, came nearer and joined in the discussion, averring that, since the stranger had cured her headache, he should be treated with special consideration. Hawthorne was astonished at this interruption, and still more at her aid. He had not seen her bathe her feet and she had lain down no more than any other member of her family. He eyed her hands, however, and saw that she had cut her finger-nails. Her interference did not seem to soften her husband's mood, for he roughly told her to mind her own business and not put herself forward among men. Lopez, with all a Paraguayan's engaging patience and simplicity of bearing, spoke long and persuasively.

Suddenly Cabral's demeanour altered. Rising from the ox-skull on which he sat, he beckoned Lopez and Hawthorne towards a pile of brushwood some fifty yards from the hut. Halting by it, he pointed to it and removed his sombrero.

Without knowing why, Hawthorne felt a sort of chill, a thrill of solemn emotion. The great empty dome of sky seemed all at once a hallowed shrine. That incommunicable, innate dignity which never wholly forsakes the roughest and most degraded Castilian suddenly ennobled Cabral and all about him irradiated an atmosphere of reverence, of privacy, of consecration.

"My mother," he began, "was the best woman I ever knew or heard of. God never created a better. Her last request to me was that her bones might be buried in consecrated ground, and I made oath to keep my pledge. My father's bones lie in the old churchyard at Guari, and when she begged me for that last promise she must have thought of his grave. But more than a year before, though none of us had then heard of it, the padre at Guari had died of smallpox, when most of the Indians there died also. The

remainder were too weak to defend themselves when the wild Tobas of the Gatemy forests crossed the river and fell upon them. They were all massacred and the huts burned and the church too. So when I rode to Guari, swimming my horse over the Pequery on the way, I found only some charred beams and blackened stones left of the church and the churchyard all overgrown by brambles.

"Who knows whether consecrated ground keeps its holiness when the church is burned and no priest says the daily prayers? I know not. My father's bones are at rest, the ground was surely sacred when we laid them there. But would that same ground be consecrated for any new burial? Who can say?

"To Guarapuava I dare not try to carry her. It is too far away. I should be gone too long from my home.

"So I have left here, under this heap of brush, all that remains of my dear mother, where we laid her the night she died, and covered her till her bones might be white and clean to gather and carry as I had promised.

"You ride to Santa Maria or to Foz de Iguassu. If you will give me your word and oath to carry my mother's bones to either church, to see them buried in holy ground, to have the padre say a mass for her soul, you may have not two horses but ten, and your choice of my herd. And my son Duarte will guide you up the easiest pass over the Cordillera to the top whence you can see the pampas beyond, down the pass which will lead you to the open plains above the headwaters of the Taquary. Only fulfil for me my mother's wish and you shall have all I can give."

Cabral's eyes were tearless, his face expressionless, after the fashion of his kind, who shed tears not twice in a lifetime, laugh maybe three or four times between birth and death and smile not more than twice a year; but his deep feeling was manifest despite his even tones and stolid bearing.

"I promise all you ask," Hawthorne said with more emotion than the Gaucho.

"And will you swear?" Cabral insisted.

"I will also swear," Hawthorne affirmed.

"On what?" the Gaucho queried.

Hawthorne slid his hand into his bosom and brought out his testament.

"This," he said, "is a copy of the Holy Evangel such as the priest reads from at the left-hand side of the altar at mass. On this will I swear."

He opened the book and exhibited the Greek text.

Cabral's face, which had remained impassive when he had spoken of his mother, turned grey with awe.

"No man would break such an oath," he said, and his voice shook. "Swear!"

Formally in his deepest-vowelled Castilian Hawthorne swore and kissed the shut book.

The Gaucho shouted to his son, who hurled himself on his horse's back and galloped furiously away.

Then stolidly and without a variation of demeanour Cabral fetched the hide of yesterday's last bullock, cleared away the brushwood and gathered the bones, no two now keeping together, into the green hide. Closely he packed them, tightly he drew the hide, firmly he laced the compact *seron* with a long raw-hide thong.

Hawthorne and Lopez chose such horses as pleased them from the herd which Duarte had meanwhile driven into the corral. Their worn-out beasts were left with the herd, and while the sun was yet low they set off, Duarte Cabral in the lead, the inconsiderable oblong hide packet lashed behind his saddle.

Keeping the Cordillera always to the right, scarcely drawing nearer to it at all, he guided them over an almost perfectly level plain for twenty waterless leagues before they saw ahead the wavering, shimmering fly-cloud that marked another Gaucho dwelling.

Their stay was a repetition of the night before; their host's name Pelagio Guimaraes, but he, as had Cabral, spoke Spanish of a sort.

Guimaraes, like Cabral, had unburied bones waiting conveyance to consecrated ground. His first wife, sister of his present wife, had died five years before, and her skeleton lay under a heap of stones by the corral. Laced in a hide *seron*, they too were slung behind one of the soldiers.

Next day they were entirely among the low foothills of the Cordillera, and by noon were picking their way at a slow walk up a narrow, freshet-washed valley, between

round-shouldered mountains, blunt and squat, forest-covered to their domed summits.

Hawthorne thought he espied *yerba* trees up a side-gully and horrified their guide by wasting time while he climbed up to see. They were *yerba* trees of a kind, but all he reached of the inferior, spotted-leaved variety.

They camped only when it was too dark to see.

Next day, before noon, Duarte triumphantly checked his horse at the crest of a long gravelly gorge, and pointed in front of him down an easy-sloping cove that expanded into a broad valley opening on the pampas beyond.

Then he took from his horse the pitiful little *seron*, now shrunk with two days' sun to a hard, tight-stretched cylinder, and lashed it behind Hawthorne's saddle.

When it was fast he leapt upon his mount and began his return without a word or gesture of farewell.

Far down the vista, a league or more beyond the mouth of the valley, they could make out above the level horizon against the blurred blue skyline a wavy thread of blackness, a mere filament, the pillar of swarming flies that marked their day's goal, the next Gaucho homestead; and above it the sleepy vultures soaring drowsily in the firmament.

They found food and repellent shelter that night at the cabin of Felipe Corbulon, a Gaucho less grim and stern than those north of the Cordillera. His dwelling had stout hide curtains to hang at the door and in the windows at night or in rainstorms. He was visibly proud of this unusual comfort.

From his abode, also, they carried away hide-laced bones to be buried at Santa Maria, which he averred was nearer than Foz de Igassu.

(2)

Next day, when the Cordillera was already only a blue line against the sky far behind them, and all the rest of their horizon was as level as the plain they traversed, Lopez shaded his eyes with his hand and peered far away to his left. Then he pointed. Staring in that direction, Hawthorne descried a horseman at a furious gallop. He was riding at a long angle to their course, so as to intercept

them when their lines met. Before Hawthorne could make up his mind as to whether the horseman was alone, a shout from one of the soldiers directed their attention to their right. Similarly galloping to head them off, appeared another rider far away on the horizon.

Their tired horses, their probable distance from water, their scanty supplies of *charque*, made it imperative that they keep on at their highest safe speed. As they cantered along, Hawthorne and Lopez conferred.

"Surely," Hawthorne called, "there can be no Portuguese south of the Cordillera."

"There is no 'surely' when Paulistas are concerned," Lopez shouted back at him. "Mamelucos may be hereabouts for all we can tell, though we know of nothing to attract them here now."

"If they are Paulistas," Hawthorne rejoined, "they are only two."

"Who can tell," Lopez shrugged, "how many may be following them? We can only take our chances."

When the furiously galloping riders came near, they could make out that each carried something on his horse, both behind and also on the saddle-bow before him.

Nearer yet appeared plainly children clinging to each rider, two to one, and three, a half-grown girl behind and two little boys before, to the other. Jolted and bounced and positively flung aloft at each leap of the horse, they hung on somehow.

The first who came within hail ranged his beast alongside, kept up with them, and shouted to inquire whether any one of them was a cleric and would baptise his children. When they made it clear to him that his chase was in vain, he waved a brown hand, let his horse slacken its pace, and was swallowed up into the plain behind the next expanse of giant thistles.

So of him that drew near from the west. His face showing no change at his bitter disappointment, he turned back with his progeny unchristened into the prayerless, priestless vastness of the empty wilderness; he sank out of sight into its illimitable levels.

## (3)

Nothing he had come across in books about Guayrá, nothing he had heard from Paraguayans who professed to know the region or know of it, had led Hawthorne to expect to find marshes along the Jejuy-Guazu. But interminable swamps forced them farther and farther east. When at last they came to a clean, sharply banked stream the current was swift and the narrow river too deep to be fordable. Still moving eastward they saw approaching them two horsemen not at a gallop but at a walk. Nearer, they made out that one was leading the other's horse. When they were close, they saw that the rider of the led-horse swayed and lurched as the beast moved along. Even before they came within hail of the leader, they could see that the man on the horse he led was held up by a sort of Saint Andrew's cross of two sloping poles, lashed to the girths. The outline of humanity behind this support was fastened to it by straps round the legs and a sling of strips of hide under the arm-pits. The upper ends of the two sticks projected beyond the figure's head, which nodded and lurched horribly between them.

Suddenly Hawthorne felt a qualm burn through his brain.

The figure on the led-horse, the human shape under the hemispherical crown and broad brim of the weather-beaten hat, inside the sun-faded, threadbare poncho, was, he realised, a corpse, propped up thus in its garb of life to be conveyed to its last resting place.

The rider of the first horse was a Catalan, but with manners altogether Castilian. His name he told them was Andres Garavito. His brother had died the day before and he was taking his body, in the fashion usual among Gauchos when near a church (fifty miles or less they called "near"), to Foz de Iguassu for burial.

Yes, he knew of a ford; they had missed it half a league farther downstream; it was of a sort to deceive strangers.

In this gruesome company they reached Foz de Iguassu, which they found was the same as Santa Maria, at the confluence of the Iguassu and Paraná.

'After the padre had duly buried the bones and said the masses in their sight and hearing, Garavito obligingly offered to guide them back northward along the Paraná to find their Payaguás.

These they actually encountered on the third day, only two missing, and the survivors stolidly indifferent to their comrades' death and to their own past dangers and privations.

Garavito, more mannered than Duarte Cabral, bade them farewell civilly and galloped off eastward.

They were ferried over the broad, placid river, explored the Rio Acaray, passed on down the Paraná to the mouth of the Rio Monday, which they ascended to Minangua and along which they found many extensive *yerbales*, even thicker than those by the Acaray.

When again they drifted down to the Paraná, they passed on down the big, still river, making brief excursions into Paraguay up the rivers called Pirapyta, Yucay and Gyrapay, along which they found the forests one vast *yerbal*; and into the wasted upper territories of Misiones on the other side up the Mbocay, Aguaray and Piray-guazu, now shrunk rills, then streams ideal for canoeing and flowing through endless *montes* of the finest Paraguayan *yerba*-trees.

At Corpus, the first surviving mission-hamlet, they landed. The square was weed-grown, the huts sagged drunkenly sideways, sun-warped and rain-sodden, not one repaired for years past, the roofs rifted and unfit to keep out water. The shops where carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, weavers, shoemakers and tailors had worked when the Jesuits ruled were now vanished; their places could be barely made out on one side of the square where the upsprung briars and brambles grew in vaguely-apparent rectangles along the collapsed ruins. The church was half roofless, its walls green with mould and nettles growing from the mouldy chinks, the stones bare of whitewash and blackened by the weather. The gardens and farm fields were mostly weed-choked, the orchards cut down, the *yerba*-plantations dissolving into the general scrub of upgrowth, neither shrubbery nor forest, which was burying the former cultivation.

Hawthorne's buoyant disposition felt the depression of



the Indians' dogged hopelessness and acquiescent misery. Apathetic and listless, they lounged about their wretched hovels and scarcely less lethargic they dragged themselves to their manioc fields, did there some half-hearted weeding or hoeing and as dispiritedly dragged themselves back to the mockery of a town.

San Ignacio Miri, Loreto and Santa Ana were as Corpus.

From them Candelaria differed only in the magnitude of its downfall. They were hamlets of some two hundred, shrunk from villages of maybe a thousand; where three thousand had prospered, now six hundred starved at what was still called Candelaria.

Its church was a more hideous ruin in that its interior still showed blackened lines of gilding and mildewed hangings, once crimson. So much mould had spread and thickened on its walls that it formed a sort of soil, from which grew not only nettles, but trailing vines. Each window-sill was a bed of noxious greenery.

The college was still covered by the skeleton of a roof, but the rafters were ready to fall and threatened to crash down at any moment, the remains of tiles on them were but a reminder that a roof there once had been. The ample *patio*, formerly a level of brickwork, showed no trace of its pristine smooth pavement beneath a growth of thorny weeds almost shoulder high.

The gardens, orchards and *yerba*-plantations had vanished more completely than those of Corpus. All was a mere jungle of wild growth, where sixty years before they had supplied even an abundance of every variety of vegetable and fruit which the soil and climate could produce; now Don Felipe, the fat curate, anxious to do honour to his distinguished guests, could set before Lopez and Hawthorne no better fare than beef, poultry, cabbage and Indian corn with the inevitable *maté*.

He was a plump and jolly man, and talked of organising a fête for the following day.

Lopez bowed and smiled, but Hawthorne could not imagine festivities amid such dreary surroundings and, as they sat under the tiny portico of the parsonage, gazed with disfavour at the neglect, filth and wretchedness all about.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

## HIDES

EAGER to escape from the squalid misery and hopeless desolation of what had once been a bustling town, Hawthorne, after thanking Padre Felipe for his hospitality and his wish to entertain them with shows and games, when he felt that he had said enough for the needs of politeness, talked of his anxiety to return promptly to Asuncion, of El Supremo's injunctions concerning haste, and enquired of Lopez whether they could not cross the river that afternoon and push on the next day to Motas. Lopez smiled a mysterious smile, a smile Hawthorne had learned to know well.

"Not to-day, Señor Don Guillermo," he said gently, "nor yet to-morrow. We shall be able to see the bull-fights and plays, to enjoy Padre Felipe's entertainments. It will not be possible for us to cross the river until Thursday morning."

Hawthorne recognised the tone and inwardly resigned himself to the delay. Merely for pastime he argued and wheedled. Lopez's tones grew silkier and silkier, and his smile blander and blander. Clearly, his mind was made up and it was equally plain that his reasons for delay could not be discovered.

As they were discussing the matter, Tolomeo reappeared, running at the top of his speed and all out of breath.

"Artigueños!" he gasped.

Padre Felipe waved a plump hand.

"Be not afraid!" he wheezed. "The Artigueños will respect us."

"You are friendly with them?" Hawthorne queried.

"I rode once a hundred leagues," the good father asserted, "to give absolution to one of them; thirty leagues I have ridden a score of times on similar errands. With me they are lambs."

Yet Hawthorne noticed Lopez hitch his sabre forward and inspect his pistols, and it was with some trepidation that he caught sight of a cloud of dust out on the plain, saw it rapidly near them, descried through it the forms of men

on horseback, and made out their appearance as they tore down the street towards the parsonage.

In a tornado of dust they swept up to the very edge of the verandah, with Gaucho precipitancy reining up their dripping mounts in the space of their own length, and, staring at the group in front of the parsonage, sat easily in their saddles, some twenty tatterdemalion ruffians, their sabres dangling by their *potro* boots, their ragged ponchos hanging anyhow, their fierce eyes glaring from under their hat-brims, every face masked in dust, every man and horse fairly hidden under a coating of it.

Nearest to the priest and his guests stood a magnificent horse terribly lean and appallingly blown. More even than the rest his colour was almost concealed under his outer skin of dust, sweat and lathered foam. His gored sides heaved, his nostrils panted, he champed his enormous bit, tossed his handsome head, and, as the bubbles poured from his mouth, besprinkled with froth both himself and his master.

He, clearly leader of the band, was a tall, raw-boned, ferocious-looking man. He wore *potro* boots, with rusty iron spurs, their rowels two inches in diameter. A great sabre in a rusty steel scabbard hung by them, from a belt of half-tanned leather, much worn, smeared and stained, into which were thrust two big cavalry pistols and a large knife with a leathern sheath. His *chiripá* was mostly hidden under a long, tattered poncho through the rents in which showed the red facings and blue cloth of a soiled and faded jacket. Under a foraging cap and haloed about by a prodigious abundance of red hair, red beard and red moustachios, all matted with sweat and powdered with dust, his face, set off by a pair of huge, plain gold hoop earrings, its parched lips hanging with great pieces of shrivelled skin, showed sunburnt almost to blackness and blistered to the eyes, which sparkled, blue-grey, bright and brilliant.

He eyed the party under the verandah with a stare of comical disappointment, and seemed too much taken aback to utter a word.

The priest greeted him civilly, addressing him as "Don Pedro," and invited him to dismount and enter.

"*No se afiiga, Pai Felipe,*" the red-headed portent replied. "*Estamos bien aquí.*"

The local Spanish words were uttered with such a strange accent, gluing them together, as it were like butter-sauce over a pudding, that Hawthorne scrutinised the man with sharpened attention and listened to him with all his ears.

After thus bidding Padre Felipe not to bother and declaring that they were very well where they were, he went on in the same queer Spanish to say that he had heard Padre Felipe had as guest a gentleman from North America, a "*Señor Americano del Norte.*"

"This is he himself," the priest explained, indicating Hawthorne. "Don Guillermo Atorno, whom you behold with your eyes."

At this the carroty giant's countenance displayed in rapid succession bewildered amazement, incredulous astonishment, and reluctant belief; he pulled off his foraging cap, made a sort of obeisance, extremely awkward and unmistakably Hibernian, and burst out into English, or rather Irish; for every syllable was flooded under the thick Connaught brogue which had disguised his Castilian utterance.

"Glory be tu God, Sorr," he began. "Ut's a glad man Oi am tu clap me oyes ahn yez."

Here he broke off and flung over his shoulder in Spanish a brief bark of an order to his ruffians, at the sound of which all save one wheeled their horses and spurred off as they had come. As the noise of their departure lessened in the distance, he recommenced:

"Oi didn't know yez, Yer Anner. Oi'd niver hov known yez for an *Americano del Norte*. Shure Oi wuz lukin' for a little whipper-shnapper ov a man all dandified, wid silver shpurs, an' a silver-handled knoife in his bute-leg, an' a silver knob ahn his rebenque whip-handle, an' his waist all squeedged in wid a red sash an' shinin' brass buttons crowthin' aitch other all up an' down his blue jacket, an' wid his poncho danglin' behin' him loike the villian in a play at a theayter, an' wid a bow in his button-hole an' gloves wid gauntlets loike thot wasp, thot jackanapes, thot thafe av the wurruld Tuckerman, him as calls himself Don Korkey. Shure, he's the wan NARTH Amurrican iver Oi set oyes ahn. Begob, Oi thot all Amurricans wuz the sphit an' immidge av him. Shure, ye're not thot sort av a man at all at all, Sorr. Glory be tu God, ye're a foine up-

sthandin' lad. Ye're fit far an Englishman or an Oirishman, anny day. Galway'd not be ashamed tu own yez, Sorr. Ut's a glad man Oi am tu be lukin' at yez, as Oi wuz sayin'. Shure, Oi've cut the camp a hundred leagues an' more all far tu talk wid yes, Sorr. Glory be tu God, Oi'm in toime. An' moight Oi ask yez, Yer Anner, wull yez be here the morn, or are yez lavin' the noight or the mornin' early?"

"I shall be here until Thursday," Hawthorne replied, with a glance at Lopez.

"Glory be tu God!" the Irish Gaucho ejaculated. "Thin we can talk at our aize. Oi'll be here an hour afther sunrise, an' Oi'll ask yere lave tu opin a matther av business wid yez. Now Oi'm toired an' hungry an' thirsty wid ridin' all day in the sun. Oi'll be aff tu me min, Yer Anner."

Padre Felipe, interpreting his tone and look, urged that he dismount and sup with them. Hawthorne joined in with an attempt at persuasion.

The weary centaur refused the invitation in his blurred Spanish, adding to Hawthorne:

"Oi'll be bist aff wid a belly full av the beef me byes'll be roastin' by now. An', av Oi wuz tu lave thim tu thim-silves, God knows wut they'd burn or who they'd kill before sundown."

With this he galloped off, followed by his solitary retainer, a stockish fellow, whose hair showed very black even under its coat of dust.

"Who is that man, Pai Felipe?" Hawthorne queried.

"That," the Padre returned impressively, "is Colonel Don Pedro Cambél, the most beloved and trusted follower of our ever-victorious Protector of the Banda Oriental—General Don José Gervasio Artigas."

"Surely," Hawthorne exclaimed, "he is an Irishman."

"I have heard," said Padre Felipe indifferently, "the name of the country from which he came, but I do not recall it. It may be as you conjecture, Señor Don Guillermo."

"How on earth did he come into this part of the world?" Hawthorne asked.

"I seem to recollect," the Padre mused, "that when General Lord Beresford invaded the viceroyalty, Don Pedro

was a sergeant in his army; that he was taken prisoner, held until after the English had sailed away, escaped, joined Don Gervasio, rose rapidly in his estimation, and is now his right-hand man."

In response to further questions, the Padre told many tales of the Irish Gaucho; of his prodigious strength, his amazing daring; his skill in the Gaucho duel fought hand to hand, each adversary with a long knife in his right hand and a poncho round his left; of his ability to quell any riot, free-fight or outbreak, whether in the street or in a drink-shop, by dashing among the combatants with a whirling sabre and distributing slashing cuts, usually upon the parties at fault; of his incredible prowess in battle; of his superhuman endurance of heat, cold, thirst, hunger and fatigue; of his exemplary piety when he had leisure for religious duties.

Such anecdotes occupied the gathering until bedtime.

Next morning, after a long night's sleep and a leisurely breakfast, Hawthorne sat under Padre Felipe's verandah smoking and watching for the dust of a galloping horseman. No dust appeared. Instead, he saw approach, along the uneven space of mounds and hollows miscalled a street, two men on foot.

The shorter walking meekly, some paces in the rear, was an ordinary Gaucho Artigueño, wearing a sombrero, a poncho and *potro* boots with big spurs, against which clattered a long cavalry sabre.

The taller man who strode ahead, wore top-boots of European cut; brown velveteen breeches; a broad scarlet sash, over it a black leather belt from which hung a sabre in a new scabbard; a nearly clean white waistcoat which showed a gold watch-chain and seal; and a ruffled shirt, almost as clean as the waistcoat. Round his neck was knotted à la Byron a yellow silk kerchief. Notably he wore a coat, and no man in the valley of the Rio de la Plata wore a coat in those times unless he was a dandy or a personage or aspired to be one or both.

This coat was probably the only coat then in Candelaria and not improbably the only coat displayed there in fifty years; an undeniable coat with skirts, pocket-flaps, cuff-flaps, yellow linings, yellow facings, and yellow buttons; a coat of cloth much worn and faded, but still recognisable

as once of Mazarine blue; a coat parading in one of the buttonholes of its broad collar-flap a tricoloured rosette.

The face of its wearer showed clean-shaven under his big straw hat, with its broad ribbon of patriots' blue.

Only the plain gold hoop-earrings and the red hair identified the exiled son of Erin of the previous evening.

When within speaking distance, he pulled off his hat and made a rather stiff but very low bow, at once pouring out a torrent of speech:

"Shure, Sorr," he began, "ut's Oi thot wuz the fule, an' afther cuttin' the camp a hundhred leagues tu see yez."

Hawthorne perceived that the exile was thinking partly in Spanish and that "cut the camp" stood for "*cortar el campo*," "cross the country." In fact, to the end of his interview with Hawthorne, he spoke of the country always as "the camp."

"Yer Anner," he went on, "Oi wuz thot tuk aback at soight av yez thot Oi clane furgot me manners. Oi nayther tould yez me name nor asked yez yer awn. Savin' yer prisince, Sorr, what wud yez be callin' yersilf in yer awn counthry, now?"

When he was told, he extended a big, freckled paw.

"An' ut's a proud man Oi am, Misther Hawthorne, Sorr, tu shake yez be the hand, Sorr. Me father's name (God rist his sowl!) wuz Terence Campbell." (He pronounced it with a strong accent on the last syllable.) "Terence Campbell av Killconnell he wuz, an' ut wuz Payther he hod me christhened at Killconnell parish church, Mary be gud tu him. Whin Oi wuz a shlip av a bye, Oi wint up tu Dublin tu me uncle's thannery tu larn the thanner's thrade, an' well he larned ut tu me. Shure an' theer Oi fill in luv wid a foine bit av a gurrl, a blue-oyed, goulden-haired fairy, named Katy O'Hara. Ut wuz all thru her Oi gut into thrubble an' 'listed far a sodger. An' so Oi kem tu be wid the ould Sivinty-Furst av the loine whin we tuk the Cape, an' wuz promoteth tu be a sergeant, an' so, whin Admiral Sorr Home Popham sailed frum the Cape, Oi wuz sergeant in the ould Sivinty-Furst. An' so Oi kem tu this counthry. An', bein' tuk prisoner, Oi wuz lift whin Ginerall Lord Beresford sailed away home; an' so Oi cum to Corrientes tu Don Angel Blanco's thannery theer. Thin, whin the wars begun, Oi jined wid Ginerall Artigas, an'

here Oi am, Sorr. Here they do be callin' me Don Paythro Cambél an' Oi'm Coronel o' cavalry an' Oi roide wid anny-wheers frum twinty to eight hundhred bully byes at me ardher, ivery wan av thim riddy tu doy fur Don Paythro Cambél, Coronel undher Gíneral Don José Gervasio Artigas, Lord Purthector av the Banda Oriental. An' now, Yer Anner, yez du be knowin' who ye're talkin' wid. Oi'm Don Paythro Cambél thot wuz Pate Campbell in Dublin an' this is me page, Don Eduardo, thot wuz Eddie Geoghegan in Tipperary before he tuk tu sodgerin'."

Here he pointed to his ponchoed, *potro*-booted, bare-toed equerry, and, after shaking hands all round, took the chair by Hawthorne. His page, impassive as a genuine Gaucho, squatted by the wall in the sun.

The priest's peon brought *maté* and cigars.

They sipped, puffed and regarded each other.

As soon as his cigar was drawing well, the visitor continued his breathless outpourings of speech.

"Misther Robertson, Sorr—Misther Hawtharne, Oi mane, axin' Yer Anner's pardhin—they du be tellin' about the camp thot yez du be sailin' up an' dhown the rivers an' cloimin' the hills, smellin' out these here holly threes, loike, thot grows the leaves they gathers tu make this here jackass tay we du be suppin' up thru our cane poipes same as all thim Gowchers du be duin', same as we all larn frum thim. An' Oi say thot yer awn poipe, Sorr, us silver same as ut shud be far so foine a ginthlemin as yersilf.

"Now we Oirish uz all over the wurruld for fun or be-kase ut's the will av God; but, shure, wid Scotchmin or Englishmin or Amurricans, 'tis differunt entoirely. Yez du be all aloike wan way. Wheeriver yez may be, ye're theer tu make yer farchuns. Oi'll make bowld tu say, Misther Robertson, Sorr—Misther Hawtharne, Oi mane, Sorr—ye're here in Candelaria this blissid minnit tu make yer farchun. An' ye're thinkin' av makin' ut out av jackass tay. Uz ut not thrue, Yer Anner?"

Hawthorne, amazed and interested, admitted the truth of the perspicacious Milesian's conjecture.

"Now moind yez, Misther Robertson—Misther Hawtharne, I mean, Sorr," the Irishman went on, "Oi'm not denyin' thot farchuns moight be made out av jackass tay, an' maybe yez'll be afther makin' yer farchun thot way.



Theer's jackass tay-leaves galore agrowin' ahn the threes all up an' down the camp frum here tu Xandaré an' further narth iverywheers. An' theer's lashin's av jackass tay dhrunk iverywheers in this parrt av the wurruld from Lima to Chubut. Maybe, af ut's the will av God, yez'll tache all the wurruld tu be dhrinkin' jackass tay an' tu loike ut uz will uz we du. An' theer moight be tin farchuns far yez intil ut far all Oi cud till.

"But, Misther Robertson, Sorr—Oi mane, Misther Hawtharne, Sorr—Oi've cut the camp a hundhred leagues an' more all far tu say till yez thot the nacheral way far tu make yer farchun in these parrts av the wurruld uz hoides.

"Hoides, Misther Robertson, Sorr—Oi mane, Misther Hawtharne, Sorr—hoides uz the nacheral gowld-moines av all the camp hereabouts. Lit me expashiate wid yez, Yer Anner. Catthle, hereabouts, uz called *ganado*, as yez du be knowin' yersilf, Sorr, widout me a-tillin' av yes. Now, *ganado de rodeo*, thot's thame catthle, thim thot's roundhed up an' brandhed. Shure, since the rivolushun, theer's not minny herds av tame catthle in the camp. 'Tuz all *ganado alzado*, thot's woilde catthle. Av thim theer's no ind, no ind ut all. 'Thousands an' tins av thousands av thim. An' woilde harses an' mares, twoist uz minny uz cows an' bulls. They roams the camp, they hoides in the thustles, an' in the bogs roun' Lake Ibera. An' the byes, av theer's anny wan tu pay thim, goes out be muneloight an' crawls in amongst thim harrt-brakin' tharny locus' threes an' sthabs an' throat-cuts thim woilst they du be slapin' in the bushes. Or they droives the harses an' mares intu corrals made av sthakes an' raw-hoide cables, an' throws thim wid lassos or wid *bolas*, thim balls ahn the ind av ropes they du be whirlin' roun' theer hids an' throwin' tu tangle thim roun' theer hoind ligs. An' they skhins thim theer ahn the groun'.

"Now, Misther Robertson, Sorr—Oi mane Misther Hawtharne, Sorr—give me the wurrud an' Oi'll sit a thousan' an' more av the byes tu shlarterin' catthle an' harses far yez. Hoides yez shall hov, av ut's hoides yez'll be wantin', hoides be the tin thousan'. An' harse hoides uz eight shillin' in London, they du be tillin' me. An' the byes'll kill yez harses, all yez'll pay far, ut a *medio* a harse or mare; an' thot's thruppence aitch. Sthakin' an' clanin' the

'hoides'll be uz much more an' carrtin' thim tu Corrientes or Goya the same; an' thot's three *medios* aitch hoide riddy tu load ahn shipboard. Shure, Misther Robertson, Sorr—Oi mane, Misther Hawtharne, Sorr—theer's farchuns in harse hoides. An *ganado* hoides uz tu *rials* aitch, thot's wan shillin'; an' they'll fitch wan pound aitch in London, an' that's twinty toimes whut they du be costin' yez heer. Shure, Misther Hawtharne, Sorr—Glory be tu God, Sorr, Oi named yer name roight ut lasht, Sorr—shure, Yer Anner, theer's farchuns tu be made in hoides, uz Oi'm hopin' yez'll be thinkin' yersilf be now, afther listhenin' tu me. An' shure, now yez've listhened tu me, whut'll yez be sayin'?"

Hawthorne reflected, amused and not eager to terminate the diverting interview.

"Suppose," he said, "I should be thinking of dealing in hides and should consider shipping hides from Goya or Corrientes to London, as you propose, of what interest would that be to you?"

"Ah!" the Irish Gaucho exclaimed. "The camp is all in disardher. Theer's bin murtherin' an' robbin' goin' ahn these foive years. The *estancieros* hov lift theer *estancias* an' flocked intil the towns, intil Corrientes or Goya or Santa Fé; the herders hov taken tu sodgerin' or thurned intil robbers, intoirely; the big tu-wheeled carrts, wid theer wheel-sphokes uz long uz a tall man, the carrts they did be usin' tu carrt hoides tu Corrientes or Goya uz all schattered about the camp, some bruk an' some rotted wid the rain an' the sun; the *estancias* uz all burrnt or fallin' tu paces, theer rufes bruk in; the catthe an' harses uz all gone woild, uz Oi wuz a-tillin' yez, Sorr; divil an *estancerio*'ll sthick his nose out av a town; ivery man yez'll mate in the camp uz a murtherer or worse, vultures an' crows uz all about, atin' whativer uz killed annywhers; the woild dogs they du be callin' *cimarrones* ranges the camp be the hundhred, dhroves av thim killin' an' atin' whut they kin ketch; 'tuz all ruin an' disolation."

"But at that rate," Hawthorne broke in, puzzled and bewildered, "there can be no possibility of collecting hides, even of wild cattle or horses, or of buying or selling them or any merchandise."

"'Tuz so tu-day, Misther Hawtharne, darlin'," Campbell continued excitedly, "but jist pass me the wurrud, an'

'twill not be so in tin days. Oi kin du far yez whut Oi did far Misther Robertson, an' Oi wull, av yez pass me the wurrud. Sthart me aff an' Oi'll pass the wurrud along thot anny man thot intherfeers wid yez uz intherfeerin' wid Don Paythro Campbell. They all knows me. Whin Pépé tuk me out av Don Angel Blanco's thannery, Oi called him Ginerál Artigas, cap aff an' oyes ahn the groun'. Shure, in a wake he wuz callin' me Don Paythro an' Oi callin' him Don Gervasio. He sune found Oi cud foight. In a month we wuz callin' aitch other Paythro an' José, an' widin tu months ut wuz Paythe an' Pépé, an' Pépé an' Paythe ut's bin iver since. No man loves Pépé uz Oi du an' will Pépé knows ut. An' no man hez fawt far Pépé uz Oi hov, an' well Pépé knows thot tu. An' no man loves me uz Pépé does be lovin' me. An' all min knows thot, Misther Hawtharne, Sorr. Sez Pépé tu me, sez he:

" 'Yez hov fawt loike tin divils, Paythe,' sez he, 'an' now thim Brasileros an' Porteños uz afther givin' us a rist,' sez he, 'an' we hov a breathin' toime, far whoy shud yez not du whut yez plaze in the camp?' sez he.

"Pass me the wurrud, Sorr, an' in tu wakes Oi'll hov ivery *picaro* in the camp uz quoite uz a lamb; not wan av thim'll dare sthale, rob or threaten', lit alone murther, whoilst Oi'm tu the fore. Oi did ut far Misther Robertson. Fower hundhred thousan' hoides Oi gathered far him tu Goya an' Corrientes. Oi arganoised foive throops av carrts, aitch throop av twinty carrts, aich carrt wid a dhroiver dhroivin' his six bullocks wid his long cane goad wid the iron pint ahn the ind av ut an' the iron-pinted cross-bar sthickin' out av the middle av ut, an' wid his shart iron-pinted cane far the wheelers; aitch throop wid six *bueyeros* tu dhroive the loose relay-bullocks, an' wid a *capataz* tu oversay all the twinty carrts an' twinty dhroivers an foive herders an' tu hilpers an' thirty saddle-harses an' three hundhred bullocks althegither. Oi hod the big, wather-toight hoide carrts a rowlin' over the camp, paceful uz af ut hod bin in auld Oireland. Oi'll du the loike far yez, Misther Hawtharne, Sorr, av yez'll awnly pass me the wurrud."

"Why," Hawthorne asked, "are you not still doing so for Mr. Robertson?"

"Shure," Campbell explained, "Misther Robertson gut

so rich aff av hoides thot he does de dalin' in more payin' thrade in Buenos Aires an' Santiago."

"But," Hawthorne demurred, "there must be other traders at Goya and Corrientes now Mr. Robertson has gone away."

"Theer's awnly Misther Posthelthwaite, Sorr," Campbell declared. "God bliss him far a foine ginthlemin. A foine ginthlemin he uz an' ut wuz mesilf thot bruk the hid av a fule av a *picaro* far miscallin' him Señor Postillon, he not bein' able tu sphake Posthlethwaite dacintly. But Misther Posthlethwaite niver hez the cash Misther Robertson hod in hand."

"An' theer's awnly thot little thafe av the wurruld Tuckerman, him uz calls himsilf Don Korkey, becaze he can't sphake dacintly the Spanish far Jarge, which uz his Christian name, he bein' christhined afther Ginerall Jarge Washington. But Don Korkey uz no ginthlemin, savin' yer prisince, Misther Hawthorne, Sorr. He's a counthrymin av yer awn, but no sich a man as yez are yersilf. Cash he hos an' cash galore, but Oi'll hov no dalin's wid the loikes av him, bad cess tu him."

"So Oi've cut the camp tu say yez, Misther Hawthorne, dear, an' talk wid yez."

"And suppose," Hawthorne said, "I'm not interested in hides and can't be interested in hides, what then?"

"Thin," said Campbell, with a funny Irish face, "Oi've hod a gran' roide in the hot sun an' me face burrrnt aff av me, all far no profit ut all, ut all. But ye'll niver till me, Misther Hawthorne, darlin', thot yez aren't far makin' yer farchun, an' ut loyin' aht yer fate."

Hereupon they entered into a long discussion lasting until dinner and recommenced after the two-hour siesta.

When he finally was convinced that Hawthorne was not to be enticed or wheedled, Campbell heaved a great sigh of disappointment and resignation. They were, at the moment, entirely alone. The exile lowered his voice, however, to a whisper.

"Oi've wan lasht wurrud far yez, Misther Hawthorne, Sorr," he said. "D'yez moind whut we du be sayin' in auld Oireland, an' a prayste towld me wanst ut wuz out av the gud buke: 'The pitcher does be a-goin' tu the will an' a-comin' back, but ut gits bruk at lasht'? 'Tuz so wid

Pépé. Shure, he's niver bin beat, not wanst. But me an' him uz not so young uz we wuz. The toime'll come whin Pépé can't make huz foive an' twinty leagues a day; whin our arrums'll be sthiff an' our wits'll be dull. Thim Brasileros'll git us in the ind. Theer's woild catthle an' harses beyant countin' in the camp, an' jackass-tay threes in the *montes* tin toimes uz minny uz all the catthle an' harses; but the Brasileros in Brazil outcounts all av thim. The more we du be afther killin', the more come ahn. An' whin ut comes tu the ind, av the Brasileros ketch us they'll be afther shootin' us, an shmall blame tu thim; an' ut'll be all the same av ut's the Porteños or the Montevideanos. An' av none av thim gits us we'll git tu owld tu foight, some toime, annyhow. So Oi'm thinkin' a thanner Oi began an' a thanner Oi moight ind. Oi du be hearin' thot owld Francia uz niver contint wid the quality av the leather they du be makin' in Paraguay. Oi've a hankerin' afther Dublin far me owld age, but thot's pasht hopin' far. Now, Oi'm thinkin' a rale gud thanner wud be tu owld Francia's moind. An' so, av yez plaze, Misther Hawtharne, Sorr, av yez cud sind me a wurrud loike: 'Thanners wilkim,' ut ud aise me moind, intoirely.

"Shure, yez'll be sayin' Oi'm clane lunny, Misther Hawtharne. Yez'll be sayin' thot Paraguay's the lasht place ahn airth far me, thot Oi'm the lasht man ahn airth tu think av livin' in Paraguay, thot owld Francia ud shoot me quicker nor all the Porteños an' Montevideanos an' Brasileros; me thot sunk all huz ships an' tuk all the rist av thim an' scatthered huz navy an' killed all huz min an' chased thim home. Yez'll be sayin' all thot, an thrue far yez.

"But, Misther Hawtharne, dear, Oi fawt him, but Oi fawt him fair.

"Shure, theer's wheer he's different from thim Brasileros. He'll niver be afther shootin' me, knowin' Oi fawt him fair. An' he's not wastin' thanners, not wid all the bilts an' sthraps an' traces he needs, not wid all the worry he has wid thanners. An' me a thanner. He's not wastin' bullets nor wastin' thanners. Thot Oi know."

It was near midnight when he finally departed.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

## JUANITA

## (1)

VANISHING noiselessly down the broad Paraná in their *balsas*, the Payaguás were almost instantly forgotten. Forgotten with them were the horrors of ruined towns, hopeless remnant populations and general devastation in Misiones. Once well across the river and in the saddle, the zest of galloping on good horses frequently changed, exhilarated Hawthorne's naturally buoyant spirits. Lopez also became cheerful and strenuous, blandly parrying the offers of hospitality from the curates of Trinidad and Motas; escaping without giving offence their proffers of bull-fights, *sortijas* and miracle-plays, and pushing briskly across the ford of the Tibicuary Guazu through Yuty to Caazapá.

No sooner were they north of the Tibicuary than the alteration in the aspect of the country brought back to Hawthorne, with a rush of unexpected emotion, his keen sense of being uncontrollably in love with Paraguay. Manifestly the scenery was precisely such as that about Caapucú, Atirá and Asuncion, diversified with hills, slopes and valleys. Every hill, wooded from base to summit and tasseled along its crest with stately rigid or gracefully nodding palm-trees, was an ornament to the landscape. On the long, gentle slopes up and down which they rode they were shadowed by noble trees twined with parasitic vines and often festooned with brilliant and fragrant orchids. Beneath and among their mightier cousins grew many fig-trees in fruit, conspicuous by their dark broad leaves, lime-trees aplenty, and orange-trees, everywhere orange-trees, all bearing fruit, all in flower at the same time. From branch to branch squirrels leapt in the tree-tops, monkeys chattered; above and about flew parrots, parrakeets, cockatoos, toucans, and countless humming birds. The valleys, irrigated by unfailing brooks and rivulets feeding the larger streams, were everywhere beautifully green. Shrubs with crimson or violet blooms clustered on knoll after knoll. The

thickets were lively with pheasants, the meadows with partridges and quail, the marshes with snipe and water-hens, the ponds and lakes with wild-fowl, ducks and those magnificent birds, royal-ducks, as large as geese and gorgeous of plumage.

With all this wild life teeming undiminished much of the leveller land below the hills and above the marshes was well under cultivation. Cattle were abundant and horses were numerous. Fields neatly hedged with long lines of aloe and prickly pear displayed heavy crops of maize, manioc, sugar-cane, yucca, tobacco, and cotton. Each with its *potrero*, enclosed by a very high, thick and thorny hedge, white-washed cottages were everywhere in view, neat and homelike, every one with its vegetable-gardens, its flower-garden, and its row of beehives.

The land seemed above all others he had ever seen worthy to be well-governed, to be self-governed, to be free: Paraguay, more than any part of the earth he had visited, appeared to him a country worth saving, worth risking anything for, even life. His mood rose to an exaltation of self-effacement, devotion and resolve. His thoughts flew before him towards Asuncion, and all its woes, fears and hopes, as if the very soul of him had left his body and soared on a tempest of lofty aims and high purposes. All the resolutions with which he had been animated upon his arrival in Paraguay surged in him with redoubled power.

Approaching the capital in this high-strung state of mind, he was cantering some horse-lengths ahead of Lopez and his escort, along one of those deep-cut lanes, over-arched by interwoven branches, which had so delighted him when he first saw them and which he found now as charming as at first acquaintance. They were yet a league or more from the city and not far from Cerro de Tacumbú, when, at a sharp bend in the road, Hawthorne came face to face with Francia, riding at a slow walk on a blown and lathered horse. He had indulged in one of his beloved gallops after the daily review, and was near the extremity of the long loop he meant to make out into the country in returning home.

Francia stared, more petrified than Hawthorne, who reined in his mount. Reining his in likewise, the Dictator

gazed at him from the distance of but a few yards. His face was hard and stern.

"Señor Don Guillermo," he queried, with no previous formality of greeting, "by what route from the mouth of the Rio Blanco have you reached this locality?"

"Up the Rio Blanco, Excelentísimo Señor," Hawthorne replied, "down the Ivinheyma, down the Paraná, through Guayrá, on down the Paraná to Candelaria, and thence here on horseback through Ytapé."

Francia's face relaxed.

"You have never told me a lie," he said, "but this passes belief. Your exploits must have been stupendous, indeed. You must be more than weary. Rest well to-night. Sup with me to-morrow night, and tell your tale at complete leisure. I shall not wear you out by yielding to my inclination to turn back with you and ply you with questions."

He spurred his tired horse and passed on, his lancers behind him.

When the last lancer was out of sight Lopez ranged his mount alongside of Hawthorne's and said:

"Señor Don Guillermo, now that El Supremo has himself seen you returned to Asuncion alive and well, my responsibility is at an end."

"Has it been a heavy responsibility, Don Benigno?" Hawthorne asked quizzically.

"At times," Lopez replied gravely. "You are a wonderful traveller, Señor Don Guillermo, and endure hardships amazingly. Yet, had I allowed you to drive yourself unremittingly as you desired, you would now assuredly be buried somewhere along our track."

Hawthorne smiled.

"I thank you most gratefully for your care," he said, with a tone of sincerity.

"May I be permitted one last injunction?" Lopez queried.

"Certainly," Hawthorne assured him.

"Then let me say, Señor Don Guillermo," Lopez continued, "that you will never be sorry if you take my advice to do nothing to-night except take a good bath, eat a good supper and go early to bed. Undoubtedly you will find letters and other matters tempting you to excite yourself



and to stay up late. Put them resolutely aside until to-morrow. You need a rest almost as much as at Candelaria."

They chatted easily until the Mayorga mansion was reached. There, Tolomeo dutifully holding his stirrup, Hawthorne dismounted. As his foot touched the pavement, a joyful bark sounded from the *patio*, and the next moment he realised, with a flood of unanticipated sensations, what it meant to have a Malvinas pointer greet his master after months of absence.

Scarcely less affectionate were the greetings of the household. Supper was a long meal, for they lingered over questions on both sides, and the evening passed in leisurely narratives to an eager audience, alternating with bombardments of local news and gossip. Hawthorne went to bed soothed, contented and hopeful.

(2)

Next morning Hawthorne woke refreshed and alert. His first thought was to go to the prison at once and visit Cecilia. But immediately after breakfast his mind was temporarily diverted from her. For, among the letters and packets which Don Vicente, of the same opinion as Lopez, had carefully kept out of sight the night before, he found a long letter from Doña Juanita Bianquet which mightily roused his indignation and sympathies. He was much perturbed the moment he saw from where it was dated, and more by its contents. It ran:

"CURUGUATAY, April 5th, 1817.

"DEAR FRIEND:

"I am praying every morning and evening that you may come safe through the countless dangers which must constantly beset you. If you reach Asuncion in safety, as I trust you may, you will read this letter, and I grieve that I cannot make it pleasanter.

"I know you will sympathise, and I want you to learn of our misfortunes direct from me and not by hearsay. You must not feel that I have neglected you.

"The second evening after you left Asuncion, on the seventh of December, a beautiful moonlight evening, we

had had Don Marcos Barbeito and Don Avelino Mendez to supper and were all sitting on the *patio*, in high glee over good impromptus from Don Avelino and bad puns from Don Marcos, when Don Ponciano Velaustegui stalked gloomily in and beckoned Manuel to follow him.

"We were all in fear and trembling and our terrible apprehensions were soon turned to a worse certainty.

"For when Manuel returned, pale and agitated, he could hardly choke out the dreadful news that he had been banished from Asuncion to Curuguatay. This appalling disaster crushed us all to the earth but I endeavoured to cheer Manuel as much as I could.

"The next day our situation was really frightful. No one would come near us; not only no one dared visit us, but pedestrians, even riders, dreaded passing our house and made a circuit to avoid it. Manuel could find no one to act as his agent, collect debts due him and take charge of his property. His entrance perturbed every one he called upon as if he had small-pox. They were so distressed and uneasy that their curtness and expressions of alarm were not needed to drive him away. He could not find any one to charter him a vessel to carry us all to Quarepoti, for of course I would not hear of separating myself and the children from him, as he proposed. He spent the entire morning in going from one place to another, searching in vain for some one to help him. He returned home about noon so frightfully overcome that I feared for his life and reason. I soothed him as far as it was in my power, and we tried for the children's sake to make a show of eating our dinner.

"While we were at dinner Don Cristobal de Maria came in as urbanely as if we had been under no ban. Manuel had never thought of approaching him, as he had already fallen under the Dictator's displeasure. Now Don Cristobal came of his own accord, sat down to dinner with us, cheered us with jokes, and, when the children had been sent off to their siesta, made an unasked offer to take charge of all our affairs. He said he knew the inside of the prison as well as anybody, and had no dread of it. He then had Manuel give him a list of his creditors and debtors, found out what papers must be made out and executed, and went off, saying he would have one of his own ships chartered

for us. His last remark before he left us was that, as he was one of your protégés, he conjectured that no difficulties would be put in his way and had no fear whatever of incurring any further manifestations of ill-will from the authorities.

"Next day he returned with a notary, all the necessary papers were prepared, signed, sealed and witnessed, and that very afternoon the petition for the chartering of the *San José* was countersigned by the Dictator himself. The next morning the lading began. What with delays from rains and the dilatoriness of some of those who owed Manuel the largest sums, ten days passed before our possessions and what goods Manuel could take to Curuguatay were loaded and the rest of his property transferred to Don Cristobal's warehouses.

"After no worse trouble on the river than incessant discomfort because of the pertinacious myriads of mosquitoes, we reached Quarepoti in safety, late in the afternoon of Christmas Eve.

"What a wretched Christmas we passed and what a contrast to the merry day we had anticipated when you left, not three weeks before!

"At Quarepoti our real miseries began, and I scarcely have the courage to set them down.

"We could find no contractor with a train of bullock-carts capable of transporting us and our possessions, and so were delayed amid the squalor of Quarepoti and the unhealthy exhalations of the pools and fens, all green scum and miasmatic vapours, that surround the dozen wretched mud huts collectively dignified with the title of 'Villa,' where no expenditure of money could extract even the necessities of life from its poverty and idleness. Every noxious insect of earth and air tormented us, and my babies visibly drooped in that deadly atmosphere.

"On New Year's Eve our invaluable Cosme, who had been cook, nurse, valet and general dependence to us since I reached Asuncion, and whom the children loved so, was drowned while bathing, or was carried off by a *cayman*. We grieved for that faithful negro as poignantly as if he had been a brother.

"When the conductor at length arrived with his wagons we loaded and sent off that same day all save one, which

we detained till the following morning for our travelling carriage. In it we set out early on January 25th. We expected to overtake the heavier carts before dusk. But the swampy country so delayed us that by an hour before sunset we had not come in sight of them and were confronted by a forest so thick that it was positively dark inside it. The road became so bad that our cart collapsed, even completely broke to pieces.

"While Manuel and Ramon were examining it, we heard a jaguar squall at no great distance. At once we abandoned the cart and started on foot; Manuel and Ramon each carrying one of the girls, and the peon both the little boys. We trudged more than a league before we caught sight of the hovel for which we were searching, and I hailed it as delightedly as if it had been a palace. Our beds were rickety hide stretchers, without any mattress whatever and very foul, every sort of loathsome and venomous insect tortured us, but there was some sort of wall and big bright fires between our children and the snarling jaguars.

"At dawn Manuel rode back to the broken cart. As he returned at noon, when in sight of the hut and almost within speaking distance, his horse shied, reared, plunged and bolted; bucking and whirling round as it dashed off. It fell, Manuel under it and his right leg broken in two places.

"Manuel had not fainted and was able to direct me and Ramon in straightening the broken leg and lifting him upon a stretcher. At the cottage, as there was no one who had any idea of what should be done, I tried to set the bones myself, almost fainting when Manuel's groans ended in a terrible scream. But he mastered himself and told me to go on, grinding his teeth and gripping the cot-frame with his fingers, the sweat rolling from his forehead. I bandaged the leg and seemed to have set the bones properly and he himself was convinced I had put them exactly right. I was in doubt, and sent off Ramon on our best horse with a letter to Doctor Parlett. Ramon reached Asuncion in three days and was back in three more with a long letter in Don Jenofonte's handwriting, dictated by Don Tomas, commending all I had done and giving minute directions for every possible eventuality and first of all for making a strong tight splint.

"Within two days it was plain that Manuel was improving. But we were detained two whole months at Tacurubí, for that was the name of the horrible place, in a one-room hut, so small that our cots jostled each other, so low-roofed that Ramon had to stoop in it. Manuel suffered frightfully but was very stoical and patient.

"By March 20th he declared he could travel, as Ramon could help him on and off his horse. We started March 22nd, and in three days reached San Estanislao, a *Tapé* Indian *reduccion*, the administrator of which was kind to us. On March 28th, we resumed our journey and met with roads worse than anything we could have conceived of. The neighbourhood of Curuguatay is all one swamp. The 'roads' are tracks through the woods—long, narrow openings where the marsh-muck of the forest has been churned into bogs, holes softer and deeper than the sloughs of the morasses on either side. Our carts broke their axles over fallen trees, disappeared into *pantanos* of quaking mud and we made less than two leagues in three days. As we were one mass of sunburn and prickly heat, our faces bloated by insect bites and all of us so exhausted by the fury of the March sun that none of us could keep food on our stomachs, it was plain we would never, at that rate, reach Curuguatay alive. Manuel sent Ramon back to San Estanislao for mules, and he succeeded in procuring four. On these, each of us with a child before us on the saddle-bow—Manuel, I, Ramon, and a peon—set off on March 31st and reached here in three days, the carts following as best they could. The children survived the fierce March sun and the terrible jolting, and are already, after only two days, rapidly recovering, as the good curate here, Pai Yeguacá, had a supply of mosquito-netting to spare and a girl told us just what simple remedies are adapted to children in this region. I am visibly revived. Manuel is also mending, though he cannot yet put his foot to the ground and goes about on crutches, which Padre Yeguacá has had made to replace the rude attempts at crutches Ramon had hacked and whittled out for him.

"He is most anxious about one matter. In giving the list of his creditors to Don Cristobal, he entirely forgot one, and that one of his heaviest creditors, as well as one of our best friends. He owes him thirty English pounds in gold, which

he reckoned at nine doubloons, or one hundred and fifty *pesos* in silver, but he authorises Don Cristobal to settle the debt at Don Juan's own reckoning.

"Now please don't laugh at me because I cannot spell our good friend's name right. English names are as impossible to spell as they are to pronounce. I mean Don Juan Postelke of Corrientes.

"There, you'll know what that means, but don't laugh.

"Manuel wrote Don Cristobal, but he insists that I write you also for fear his letter to Don Cristobal may have been lost; for he would not have Don Juan cheated of his dues nor have him think ill of us.

"My pretty Luisa, Manuelita and both the little boys beg their kind remembrances to you. Our regards to all our friends in Asuncion, and also down the river.

"Your ever grateful friend,

"JUANITA ROQUEMAURE DE BIANQUET."

(3)

Although a quick thinker, Hawthorne was by nature deliberate rather than impulsive. When he did surrender to an impulse, he hurled himself utterly where it led him. The moment he had read Doña Juanita's letter he made all possible haste in reaching the Palacio.

There he found striking changes.

A neat, clean, soldierly sentry paced before the entrance. Right and left of the doorway a window had been pierced in the Jesuits' thick wall, and grilled with strong iron-work. Under the archway of the entrance a sentinel, trim and soldierly as the sentry without, stood erect and alert. On either side of the passage was a new small window and a new door. Through those on his right Hawthorne, as the sentinel halted him, saw lounging a half a dozen soldiers, trig and seemly as the sentry, and with them Zorilla; while, on his left, he perceived that the room was fitted with a tall *bufete* and a broad writing-table set against the small window. Across this he saw Beltran smiling at him.

Beltran at once jumped to his feet and came out into the passage-way. After effusive greetings and compliments and solicitous enquiries, he said:

"You pass, of course, unannounced," and returned to his office.

Hawthorne found Francia at his table, wearing his general's uniform, which became him nearly as well as the more gorgeous colonel's uniform became Beltran.

"You surprise me, Don Guillermo," he said. "I told you to delay your report until after we had dined together. Is Paraguay corrupting you into the native habit of presuming to attempt improvements upon my commands instead of obeying me?"

"By no means, Most Excellent Sir," Hawthorne replied. "My business has nothing to do with my report and appears to me to be urgent."

"State it!" the Dictator snapped. "But don't say 'Most Excellent Sir' again."

"I trust," Hawthorne said, "that I do not presume. But I assume that you will be pleased with my report."

"Assume it," Francia granted. "I assume as much myself."

"Upon which assumption," Hawthorne continued, "I beg leave to ask a favour in advance."

"You do not need any such assumption," Francia declared, his grim face relaxing into a smile. "I am not ungrateful. I have not forgotten your saving my life two and a half times by the least count. State the favour you ask."

Hawthorne then made an eloquent plea for the rescinding of the decree of banishment against Don Manuel Bianquet. He cleverly gave the gist of Doña Juanita's letter and argued that Don Manuel had been punished sufficiently. He dexterously mingled considerations of expediency with his request for the termination of the Bianquets' exile as a favour to himself. Francia listened without any sign of irritation.

"Don Guillermo," he said, "I have heard you to the end of your discourse without interruption. Now, pray listen similarly to me."

His eyes left Hawthorne's face and he stared across the court, reflectively. His face hardened into his grimmest frown.

"Don Guillermo," he began again, "I consider I was indulgent, even too indulgent, towards Don Manuel. Myself partly of French ancestry, I was perhaps too well dis-

posed towards the son of a French father and a Creole mother, perhaps to some degree because I deprecate the local prejudice against any immigrants not of pure Spanish descent.

"At any rate, I extended to Don Manuel every facility for establishing himself at Asuncion and he prospered under my favour. That favour he shamefully abused. Imports which cost him, say, a hundred *pesos* in Europe, he readily sold here for six hundred to two thousand *pesos*. Not contented with a gross profit of six hundred to two thousand per cent., surely enough to recoup him for any possible expenses of transportation, for any conceivable depreciation or outright losses, he must needs descend to a calculated system of petty misrepresentations of the quality of his goods and to false weights and measures.

"I heard of this and at first thought him traduced. I continued to hear the like reports of him from so many quarters that I could not but believe they had more than a little foundation. I made efforts to ascertain the truth, and was fully convinced of his chicanery. But I could obtain no specific evidence. So I let him alone. But I informed him of the reports against him and counselled him so to conduct himself as to be absolutely above suspicion. He continued his dishonest practices. I warned him several times, once in your hearing. He paid no heed. Finally, a day or two after you left Asuncion, some impulse prompted me to go to my window just after finishing my dinner. I found there, patiently waiting and expecting to wait hours longer, a poor Guarani woman. She told me her story, sobbing. She had saved all her earnings for two years to buy some English cotton stuff. When she had at last the necessary sum she had gone to Don Manuel's warehouse and put her all into a bolt of 'guaranteed' English muslin. It was marked 'Twenty-five yards, full length.' Don Manuel himself interpreted the marks for her and affirmed their trustworthiness.

"When she measured the muslin, it came to but nineteen yards. I myself verified her statements, for she brought with her the cotton and its original wrappings.

"I was so infuriated that I at once ordered the villain into exile at Curuguatay, in lieu of shooting him without mercy. I consider I was very indulgent."



He paused, and Hawthorne, scanning his face, recognised his most inexorable mood. He rose, took his leave, and went out at once.

He walked straight to the Velarde mansion and, after greetings and compliments exchanged with Don Toribio, who now met him for the first time, he asked to see Ventura. Much astonished, but urbanely appearing to regard this amazing request as natural from a foreigner, Don Toribio sent for his daughter. She welcomed Hawthorne as if he had been almost a cousin. As soon as possible he told her the reason of his coming and read her Doña Juanita's letter.

Ventura was as brisk and businesslike as any New Englander.

"Don Guillermo," she said, "you may leave the whole matter to me and go on to the prison, where you wanted to go. It is a great proof of your friendship for Juanita that you went to the Palacio and came here before visiting Doña Cecilia."

(4)

At the Palacio, Ventura, passed without question by the guard, gave Beltran a curt nod, left Fruela under the colonnade, and marched straight towards the Dictator. He rose to greet her. No sooner was she seated than he said:

"I have been neglectful. I meant to tell you to send for me if you wanted me, instead of coming here again."

"I thought of that," said Ventura easily, "and I knew you would come. But I reflected that it would cause, if anything, more gossip than my coming here. Of course, it is universally known we have our chess-bout every Sunday, and there is talk enough over that, Heaven knows. But for you to visit me, in addition to your regular weekly visits, would set all Asuncion gossiping afresh. As for my coming to you, surely I have not lost every citizen's right of petition and free access to the Dictator merely because I am pledged, under conditions, to become his wife?"

Francia smiled and bowed low.

Ventura came to the point at once.

"I have come," she said, "to renew my suit for the abrogation of your decree of banishment against Don Manuel Bianquet."

"I thought," said Francia, looking startled, "that we had settled that matter between us finally."

"So did I," rejoined Ventura. "But we settled it on a false foundation and wrongly. It was my fault. I accepted your statements about Don Manuel's guilt as you made them, totally forgetting your tendency to believe anything against any one to whom you take a dislike and your habit of flying into an Olympian rage over some trifle. You spoke of proofs accumulated and conclusive. You never had a shadow of real evidence against Don Manuel, and you know it: only lies of Orrego or Pai Mbatú or of some others of your paid spies.

"Oh, you need not look so amazed! Everybody in Asuncion knows who your chief spies are. And they know each other, of course. You probably have others unsuspected by the populace and unknown to your worst satellites, and you are right in general in assuming that a lie or blunder of one or two will quickly be checked by the reports of the rest. But mostly they confer with each other and make their slanders tally pretty accurately. They know whom you hate, and forge their tales to suit your fancy. Such detractions confirmed your detestation of poor Don Manuel. They fooled you with manufactured libels.

"You spoke of infamous frauds; you gave me the idea of some gigantic imposition. I find that you exiled the poor man on the mere word of a Guarani woman. Now I know that your dear Guaranies are generally truthful, but there are liars among them, not a few. She may have lied out and out. More probably she misunderstood what she heard. As likely as not he told her the cloth was only nineteen yards and explained that the marks were not reliable. Don Manuel understands Guarani wonderfully well for a foreigner not yet three years in Paraguay, and he speaks it even volubly, for his stock of words is positively stupendous. But he is entirely too glib and self-confident with it, for his pronunciation is execrable and his accent abominable. He always knows what he is saying, but hardly any one else can conjecture the purport of his discourse. It is ten to one that he told the precise truth about that wretched bolt of cloth and the woman exactly inverted his meaning.

"But, granted that he lied, that she represented his words

accurately, what was the utmost penalty he deserved? It was the price of six yards of English muslin. You have ruined his trade here, lamed him for life, and subjected him and his wife and children to unconscionable horrors. You have committed a hideous injustice for which not even a recall to Asuncion and a cash payment of the value of his whole stock of goods at the time of his exile would atone. You cannot compensate for what you have done amiss. At least, you can terminate the wrong, you can free your victims from exile, and at once. I ask you to do that."

Francia gazed at her fixedly, with a mild air of open-mindedness.

"You speak very convincingly, Señorita," he said. "But why do you waste breath and time in pleading when you know perfectly well that I would grant your merest request unsupported by any logic?"

Ventura bridled.

"I am not making this a personal favour to me," she said, "but an act of justice. I scorn cajolery, and regard a right action won by favouritism as fully as inequitable as a wrong. I am trying to lead you to act for the good of yourself and of all Paraguay as well as in reparation towards Don Manuel. If my plea cannot be supported by cogent arguments, it should be rejected. I put it forward on the ground of broad public policy."

Francia smiled.

"Argument or no argument," he said, "you know I cannot refuse you if you really insist. But since you put your plea on the ground of broad public policy let us discuss it on that basis.

"My power comes not so much from my capacity for affairs as from my personal prestige. That prestige rests almost entirely upon my Guaranies' conception of me as a being incapable of error, instantaneous in decision, swift in action, inexorable as the stars. It is not what I am but what I am thought that counts. Some Guaranies may be liars, as you claim; but, certainly, all are gossips. If I recall Don Manuel to Asuncion, the tale will run like wildfire that El Supremo has changed his mind. They will begin to doubt whether my mind is what they have thought, whether I am such as they have believed. Their faith in

me may vanish, and my power with it. I dare not run the risk."

"I can see that perfectly," Ventura admitted thoughtfully. "I think you greatly exaggerate the probability; but a probability there is. I see I must give up my hopes of having Juanita here with me again. But at least you can release the Bianquets and permit them to sail down the river to Corrientes.

"Oh, I know what you are going to say, but there is nothing in it. If Don Manuel really knew all your secrets and told them all to Perrichon, Artigas, Candiotti and Alvear, or to all Buenos Aires, it could not weaken you a particle; not if he had plans of every inch of Asuncion and Neembucú, lists of all disaffected persons, an exact description of your troops, barracks, and arsenals and an accurate count of your cannon, muskets, pistols, lances and swords, and of every grain of gunpowder you possess. You are safe behind your two rivers and they are so distracted with civil strife, so doubtful of their own tenure of power, so in dread of the Viceroy at Lima, that you have nothing to fear from them. So be sensible as well as just and write out an order for Don Manuel's release, despatch it by a swift courier to Comandante Don Pelayo Robles at Curuguatay, and give me an order on Don Meliton Isasi or Don Cristobal de Maria or Don Mauricio Zelaya, so I can get a brig off at once to Quarepoti to meet them there and take them to Corrientes."

"You have thought it all out, I see," Francia smiled. "I grant it. You reason well. I am almost convinced that Don Manuel is innocent and should be released, as he shall be, since you plead for him. You need not have argued. I should have granted a mere request, unsupported by arguments."

"I can make mere requests, unsupported by arguments, when I choose," Ventura declared. "I am going to make one now. You must have conjectured that Don Guillermo went straight from you to see me and that that is why I am here. Now I want you to promise me that you will not only never let Don Guillermo see any difference in your treatment of him because of his judicious appeal to me, not only that you will never treat him any differently than you would if he had not gone to me; but that you will never

show by action, gesture, look or word that you know he appealed to me; will not so much as let it colour your thoughts of him. Promise!"

Francia regarded her steadily. Her eyes did not leave his.

"You can be dictatorial," he said; "more dictatorial than the Dictator."

"The difference," she retorted vigorously, "is that I am dictatorial only when I am right; you are most dictatorial when you are wholly in the wrong."

Again he gazed at her; again she met his brow-beating stare.

"No wonder," he ejaculated, "that they call you 'Empress Ventura.'"

"I'll have need," she shot back at him, "of all the qualities they impute to me, if I am to get along with you and not be extinguished, effaced, obliterated!"

She spoke hotly.

Much astonished, Francia queried:

"Why do you say that?"

"You have no idea," she exclaimed, "how dominating a personality you possess. You radiate compulsion as a conflagration diffuses heat. Every other nature in your presence collapses and vanishes. I have held out against you, but I am as exhausted in every fibre of me, body and soul, as I am in mind after one of our chess-games. If I am to live any sort of life of my own with you, to be any sort of a helpmate to you, as you forecast, I must prove myself imperial in all ways, shall have to manifest myself an empress indeed."

"Am I so terrible?" Francia mused, adding: "Is a chess-game with me such an effort? You beat me always when I give you a queen, and once out of five games when I give you a rook. I thought you enjoyed our games."

"I do," said Ventura frankly, "but they exhaust me. Opposition to you, of any kind, is almost impossible! Beating you at chess, particularly when you have both knights at the end of the game, is a fearful joy. But it is dearly earned, for the labour is really terrific."

Francia turned to his table.

"I'll write both orders for you," he said.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

## IBIRAI

## (1)

HAWTHORNE, passed in by the sentry without so much as the formality of calling for Gomez, found him in the act of unlocking the door of the women's part of the prison. With a flourish which was but the last gesticulation of his greeting, Gomez waved him to enter. Three strides carried Hawthorne to the door of the hut. At sight of him, Cecilia dropped her tambour-frame and cried:

"Will!"

It was a sharp, staccato sound, almost a scream, instantly bitten off. There was in it a ring of completely English utterance.

Hawthorne stood petrified.

Cecilia, already perfectly self-controlled, retrieved her embroidery, greeted him formally in clear, soft Spanish, and gestured towards the stool. When he had seated himself, she asked:

"What caused you to return, Don Guillermo, without carrying out your intention?"

"I have carried out my intentions," Hawthorne declared.

"You have completed the circuit of Paraguay since I saw you?" Cecilia exclaimed.

"I have," Hawthorne affirmed, "and have ascended and descended every considerable affluent of the Paraná not only from our side, but also from the side of Brazil."

"You work miracles!" was Cecilia's comment.

"I wish," said Hawthorne, "I had the miraculous power to cause you to repeat what you said when I first came in."

"I am quite willing to rehearse it," Cecilia said, and she repeated her formal Spanish greeting, with a wonderfully taking whimsical manner.

"I do not mean that," Hawthorne corrected her. "I mean what you said first, when you dropped your embroidery-hoop."

"Dropped my hoop!" Cecilia exclaimed. "I?"

"Certainly," Hawthorne affirmed. "I saw you drop it and pick it up."

"How rude of you to let me pick it up, if you had been so remiss!" Cecilia teased him. "But I assure you you are guiltless. You did not so far forget yourself. I did not pick it up, for I did not drop it. You are over-fatigued on account of your journey and imagine you see what has not occurred."

"Yes, and fancy that you hear sounds never uttered."

"Tell me of your miraculous journey."

And she fell to questioning him as to dates, distances, and localities, putting him through a full and minute interrogatory.

She kept this up till he rose to go. No effort of his could induce her to recur to her apparent emotion at his entrance.

(2)

The grass-green satin of Don Gil Romero's coat and breeches, the scarlet of his waistcoat and coat-facings, the placid face of their owner, handsome despite his bristly black hair, struck Hawthorne with surprise as he entered Dr. Bargas' wine-shop. Still more astonished was he to see chubby, sleepy Don Arturo Balaguer beside his brother-in-law. Dr. Bargas, after the greetings were completed, perorated pompously:

"And to conclude, Don Guillermo, let me present two recruits to our conspiracy, Don Gil and Don Arturo."

Don Arturo smiled wordlessly at Hawthorne's expression of amazement, and Don Gil blandly explained:

"We are all in it except Vicente. We have not yet told him, though Desiderio and Carmelo feel that they should. We could not restrain ourselves from joining. As well die in the field fighting as rot in prison. It is only a question of time for all of us, even for the Bishop, if that man's power continues."

Here Padre Bogarin burst out with vituperations against Francia and told Hawthorne a recent instance of his arbitrary behaviour. Shortly after Hawthorne's departure the Dictator had set his two nephews at liberty. Francisco had immediately fallen violently in love with a beautiful octo-roon girl. Her mother, a very pious quadroon, had con-

sulted the Bishop. The good Bishop had expostulated with Don Francisco, who had expressed his entire willingness to marry the girl. The excellent Bishop, overjoyed at such an unexpected evidence of virtue in a Marecos, had repeated his favourite aphorism that at Asuncion the grace of God was manifested in a very special manner and had hastened the wedding as much as possible, himself performing the ceremony, without publishing the banns even once, according the dispensation of banns which lay within his prerogatives as Bishop.

Francia had been furious, had berated and threatened the Bishop, ending by asking had he forgotten that he, as the Supreme Dictator, was head of the church in Paraguay. The Bishop, an obstinate royalist, who had always refused to recognise the revolution by any formal utterance, though he had tacitly acknowledged it by many official acts, had answered mildly, though drily, that he had indeed forgotten. Francia had thereupon raged at him and wound up by remarking slyly that, since his memory needed some constant reminder as to who was head of the Paraguayan church, he would order the canopy over his episcopal chair in the cathedral to be removed; its absence would be a daily admonition.

He had then promulgated a *bando*, prohibiting all secret marriages; reviving and affirming the most stringent regulations about the publishing of banns before weddings; also proclaiming null and void any future ceremony of marriage between any person of unmixed white blood and any negro, mulatto, quadroon, octoroon or *mestizo*. That Don Francisco's marriage with the octoroon girl was not itself declared null and void was popularly attributed to Ventura's influence or intercession, as the girl's mother had been a servant of the Velardes.

When Padre Bogarin paused for breath, Dr. Bargas trumpeted:

"Even worse than that was the case of poor Don Medardo."

"His treatment of Don Medardo," Padre Bogarin retorted stiffly, "was indeed inexplicable, but it involved no insult to the Bishop."

"True, Lisardo, true," Dr. Bargas hastened to admit, "but it was certainly even more arbitrary."



Hawthorne looked about the warehouse from one face to the next; all were more or less reserved.

Don Gil, in his quiet way, put in:

"Don Medardo reached Asuncion after Don Guillermo departed."

Don Gregorio cleared his throat and remarked:

"The story is worth hearing, Señor Don Guillermo."

He paused a moment and began:

"Some time between Christmas and New Year's, Don Bernardo informed me that Pai Mbatú was dividing his scanty means of subsistence with a destitute stranger, whom he had taken into his cottage. A day or two later Don Gumesindo told me the same story, adding that Pai Mbatú's protégé was a Spaniard of the pure blood and manifestly a gentleman born. With Don Vicente I visited Pai Mbatú's cottage and found the guest was Don Medardo Bustamente, formerly of Buenos Aires, more lately of Corrientes, where he had taken up his abode because his friend, Don Estéban Maria Perrichon, had obtained the office of Postmaster General there.

"Not long after you came to Asuncion the Artigueños made one of their periodical raids into Corrientes; partly, as usual, to assert the supremacy of the Lord Protector of the Banda Oriental over that city in particular, partly for booty. On that occasion they were commanded by a Colonel Ramirez, who had been with General Belgrano when he invaded Paraguay and whose rashness and incompetence had contributed not a little to our success and Don Manuel's discomfiture.

"Ramirez, it seems, had known Don Medardo in Buenos Aires and conceived a dislike towards him. I believe some beauty had scorned the low-born soldier and smiled upon the handsome Mexican. At all events, Ramirez, the instant he recognised Don Medardo, had him arrested, consigned him to the care of six of his ruffians, and gave them instructions.

"They bound him, cast him into a small boat, and rowed him up the river to a low, marshy, wooded islet. There they stripped him, fired a volley at him and left him pierced by four bullets, thinking him dead.

"There he was found by a band of Payaguá Indians, who saved his life, clothed him with a poncho and a *chiripá* and

took him with them up the river and on`up the Paraguay. For some reason of their own, they kept to the Gran Chaco side of the river, eluded the patrol-boats at Neembucú and Herredura, and landed Don Medardo at Asuncion, conveying him by night to Pai Mbatú, with whom their tribe has long had some sort of understanding.

"Don Bernardo, Don Vicente and I got up a subscription for Don Medardo's benefit, and were getting signatures, collecting contributions and considering means of giving him relief more than temporary, when his presence in Asuncion became known at the Palacio. Instantly El Supremo sent for him, recognised him as one of his companions at the University of Cordova de Tucuman, reproached him for not immediately appealing to him, had him clothed by the best tailor in the city, provided him with all necessities of dress, gave him a horse and horse-furniture, procured him a servant and rented for him a comfortable cottage, the second from Don Bernardo's towards the Convent of Mercy, assuring him besides of a regular cash allowance paid weekly; saying that all this was but inadequate recompense for what he had done for him at Cordova.

"Don Medardo became at once a valued member of Asuncion society, being handsome, cultured and charming. He resorted frequently to this agreeable wine-shop, attended *tertulias* at Don Vicente's and those of Don Toribio, Don Antonio and Don Baltasar. He was much at the Palacio, for he played chess well. He often supped with the Dictator.

"One morning, about a month ago, Don Vicente, Don Bernardo, and I had an appointment to go partridge shooting with him. Don Vicente and I, on our way to Don Bernardo's, called for him. His man declared he had gone the night before to the Palacio to sup with El Supremo, and had not returned. We feared to inquire for him, and only three days later did we learn that he lay shackled in a dungeon. He lies there now. No rumour has leaked out as to why he was arrested, when, or where."

(3)

Cecilia's interrogatory as to his journey had rather piqued Hawthorne, who had anticipated no scepticism from

any one, least of all from her. Over his dinner at the Palacio he blessed her, for his recital of his adventures had made him prompt and ready with clear answers, of which he felt the need through a long, searching and inquisitorial cross-examination. The ordeal of this insistent catechising he underwent easily, thanks to his rehearsal with Cecilia.

Francia, gnawing the last fibres of flesh and sinew from the last bone of his roast pigeon, acknowledged himself convinced.

"Nobody, I dare affirm," said he, "ever had such luck before or ever will have such luck again. If I were to send out, to follow your track, one party each month for twenty years, the quickest of the two hundred and forty parties would not accomplish the journey in twice the time you spent on it. Really to have about one a human being so favoured by chance, fate, Providence, or what you please to call it, certainly by the sun, winds, weather, forests, rivers, mountains and plains, is almost a terrifying circumstance. Your uncanny luck makes you positively an object of dread."

Hawthorne smiled, for Francia was taking snuff in huge pinches, constantly repeated; and was evidently in high good humour.

"Now for your deductions and conclusions," he hinted.

"In the first place," said Hawthorne, "Comandante Fernandez had a good eye and a clear head. His report is justified by the facts. Tevego is an ideal place for a penal colony. I saw none better, none so good."

"I'll regard that as finally settled," Francia chirped. "I'll give orders at once to prepare Tevego to receive prisoners, and set about sorting out from the prison those who had best be sent there."

"And how about *yerba*?"

"Most encouraging," Hawthorne declared. "You need fear no competition from Brazil, I judge. Of course, we cannot be certain. But the true Paraguayan *yerba-ilex* seems closely confined to Paraguay. Such *yerbales* as blanket the country all about the Ypané Guazú do not extend beyond the Rio Apa. Groves of the same tree exist farther north, but thinner and more scattered. Beyond the Tepoty they thin out to almost nothing, and the *ilexes* are all of the inferior spotted-leaved variety. All up the Rio Blanco,

among the hills, and on the Ivinheyma, I found none but the inferior trees. So also on the Brazilian side of the Paraná.

"Now, of course, it may happen that farther north and east, far beyond where I reached, there may exist extensive, even vast, *yerbales* of the true Paraguayan variety. But this is too unlikely to consider. There are, I take it, no *yerbales* of the most desirable kind anywhere in Brazil.

"But everywhere I landed in Misiones the *yerba*-trees are not only Paraguayan *ilexes*, but the very best I have ever seen. To control the *yerba* market of the world, you must control Misiones."

Francia pulled a wry face.

"Our mighty dream dissolves in smoke," he said. "I cannot hope to exercise any sway beyond the Paraná, though Misiones is ours by every right, if right availed anything in these regions in these days. As it is, I cannot even dream of controlling Misiones."

"Not all Misiones, certainly," Hawthorne agreed. "But upper Misiones is not unthinkable as an appanage of Paraguay. I made a valuable acquaintance at Candelaria."

"Who?" Francia shot at him, suddenly all interest.

Hawthorne thereupon told of his two interviews with the Irish Gaucho. Francia put in many questions, and finally remarked:

"He seems to possess not a few good qualities, but, manifestly, he is handicapped by many weaknesses."

"He has one weakness useful to us," Hawthorne expanded. "He thinks he can drink without limit and remain sober."

"He tattled?" Francia queried.

"Garrulously," Hawthorne replied, "when he was unbraced with brandy. He betrayed the key to all that district and made it perfectly clear that six hundred good cavalry at Tranguera de San Miguel could scour the whole country from Itaty to Apostoles, even to San Tomé, and would be more than sufficient to protect the region to the north and east of their patrol-line. Artigas cannot well pass between the Paraná and the marshes of Lake Iberá, so that it would be only the open upland below Apostoles between the marshes and the Uruguay River that the de

tachment would have to guard. Such a command could easily keep him out of all Misiones."

"It is so easy," Francia sighed, "to talk about keeping Artigas out of this, that, or the other locality, so difficult to keep him out. Actually no man has kept Don Gervasio out of anywhere since he was eighteen years old. For thirty-five years he has roamed at will; for the past five years he has ravaged as he pleased. Yet I see a gleam of plausibility in the idea. A capable man with six hundred good cavalry might conceivably succeed. But how am I to spare six hundred cavalry, let alone six hundred good cavalry? I have not that many really good cavalymen. And could I spare the men, whom have I to command them? I might send Joaquin Lopez. But whether Don Joaquin or any less proven commander, the upshot must be the same. If he blundered, I should lose six hundred good cavalry; if he turned out competent, with his veteran six hundred he would march on Asuncion, oust me, and be Dictator of Paraguay. This is the curse I must struggle with. I can find no man whom I can trust both not to fail and, if successful, to remain loyal.

"All the same, I shall ponder the suggestion; it is too tempting to ignore, too fascinating to forget."

"Whether you carry it out or not," said Hawthorne, "you can surely keep watch on Misiones by secret agents, and if any man attempts to cultivate *yerba* you could raid across the river and obliterate his plantation."

"I should indubitably destroy any artificial *yerbal*," Francia said, "and arrest its originator. That would be entirely practicable, and even easy. A raid is a far different matter from a permanent occupation."

"Then," Hawthorne summed up, "as there are no trees of the best variety of *yerba* outside of Paraguay and Misiones, you can forever control the world's output of the best *yerba*. Danger of serious competition vanishes. You can realise your dream on its largest scale."

Francia, smiling, took a huge pinch of snuff.

At this evidence of good humour, Hawthorne ventured to tell of Campbell's attempt to provide himself with a haven of refuge.

"Humph!" said Francia. "Like his Irish impudence! But for Don Pedro I should now be in possession of Cor-

rientes. It was only his dare-devil valour that defeated and sunk my fleet. Had he not been there, the Correntinos would have surrendered to Sobremonte, and then, once in possession of the place, I could have reinforced it as often as necessary, with a good fleet to keep communications open. He robbed me of Corrientes, of my fleet, and of poor Sobremonte, who was as loyal as Ortellado, which is saying a great deal.

"But Don Pedro has always fought fair. I should welcome him, if he came. For that matter, I should welcome Don Gervasio himself if he sought my protection. He also has always been perfectly open and fair in all his hostility to me. Don Pedro, like Artigas, has never done or participated in anything underhand. That is a very strong claim to my regard. Also, I need tanners; I should shelter him if he needed a refuge. But I should never let him north of Neembucú: he would be the darling of my troops in six months, and might be Dictator in a year. No scholarly drill-master like me could cope with an all-round warrior like Campbell, equally good at combat or command and hero of a hundred battles."

He sipped the last of his coffee and took another big pinch of snuff.

"Shall we try chess?" he queried.

In the study he won two short games and was winning the third when a too-venturesome attack weakened his defence, and Hawthorne saw an opening which led him to a brilliant six-move checkmate.

Francia's good-humour instantly vanished. He pushed his chair back from the table, and began asking questions about the *yerbales* on the Acaray River. The answers did not seem to please him, and he stood up. Hawthorne rose also.

"Sit down, Don Guillermo," the Dictator said; "sit down, I beg of you. I am only thinking."

He fidgeted back and forth from the side window to the door, squeezing between the tall water-jar and the bookshelves, fingering the backs of the books.

"It frets me," he said, "to find my memory fail on any point. I have been bothered ever since a little while after you left, because I cannot locate a Latin quotation. I was certain it was in Ovid, but I have read him through twice

and either I missed it or it is not there. I have searched at random, but in vain. It has worried me more than governing Paraguay and dodging assassins."

"What is the quotation?" Hawthorne queried.

"*'Habent sua fata libelli,'*" the Dictator quoted.

"Oh," said Hawthorne, "'Books have their fates.' I can tell you where to find that. It's in Terentianus Maurus."

"Terentianus Maurus!" Francia exclaimed. "A beggarly grammarian! I don't believe you. You are wrong for once. For once your memory is as treacherous, in its way, as mine is to me. I'll wager you are mistaken."

"There is no use arguing about it," Hawthorne replied. "If you have any edition of Terentianus, I can put my finger on the line in a moment. I do not recall its number, but I have a vague idea it is something like 1258. I have a general recollection of the context. He says some will find his book wordy, and others will hold it cheap because they know more themselves already. I remember the entire line. It is:

"*'Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli.'*"

"According to the capacity of the reader, books have their fates," Francia translated. "That is striking!

"I tried to read Terentianus once, years ago, but only skimmed through him, for much of what he said about spellings and pronunciations was totally unintelligible to me. So telling a line as that I should have relished. And you claim he wrote that! Bah! Prove it, if you can. Until you show it to me, I am more than sceptical. If he wrote it, you can find it, for I have a volume of the works of the Latin grammarians, all of them together, none left out, I believe. It is a German collection, a quarto printed about 1600, as near as I can remember."

He ran his hand along one of the upper shelves. Extracting a book, he remarked:

"Edited by Elias Putsche. Hanover 1605, I almost remember the date."

Turning, he asked:

"Can you catch, American fashion?"

"Certainly," Hawthorne replied, his hands ready; and he neatly caught the volume Francia threw him across the big table.

While he turned over the pages, Francia lit a fresh cigar and stood puffing it and gazing at his guest.

Hawthorne looked up in surprise.

"Why," he exclaimed, "nearly a fifth of the pages are torn out. Only the first part of Agroetius remains, barely the last tenth of Plotius. Between them, Cassiodorus, Beda and Victorinus have vanished totally, and with them Terentianus as completely."

"Pooh!" Francia snorted. "I should have known by the binding. That is not my old copy of the grammarians; it is one Pai Mbatú gave me. His father had a dozen books, perhaps even a score. Pai Mbatú used most of them to light fires with. I did him a service while I was living in retirement at Ibirai. Of course, he could not pay me, but he gave me the two books he had left by way of an expression of gratitude. He had torn leaves out of both. I forget what the other book was, but this is one of the two."

"Now where is my own copy of the grammarians?"

He scanned the backs of the books, taking out one after another and putting each back. As he went on he fumed, stuffed the books back anyhow and then began pulling them from their places and looking behind them. Half of those he moved and many of those he disinterred he threw or piled on the floor. As his rummaging went on and each fresh attempt resulted in disappointment, he became more and more irritated. He rooted among the books, tumbled them about, muttered under his breath, now and then brushed back his hair from his forehead, appeared hot and flustered.

All of a sudden he paused, rooted in his place, and stood petrified. Hawthorne, instantly as moveless, listened intently.

"It is not that," Francia laughed. "I heard nothing. Nothing is amiss. I am only vexed with my bad memory. We shall have to postpone settling the point until to-morrow night or later. I remember now that I never brought that volume in from Ibirai. I have missed it more than once, have several times intended to fetch it, have even ridden out there expressly for it, but have always forgotten it."

"We could settle the point to-night," Hawthorne said.

"How?" Francia exclaimed.



"It is early yet," Hawthorne said. "I might fetch the book from Ibirai."

"Afoot!" cried his host.

"Not at all," Hawthorne replied. "I'll wager Bopí knows where to find a horse promptly if you give the order!"

"Humph!" Francia grunted. "Perspicacious New Englander! A horse is handy, as you conjecture. In fact, one stands ready saddled and bridled, tethered just inside the gate of the kitchen garden. You can be at Ibirai by ten and back by eleven."

He snapped the hunting-case of his repeater.

"I can do it in better time than that, if the horse is as good as most of yours. Lend me a poncho and I am off."

"Why a poncho?" Francia queried. "This mild night you'll be better without one."

"I don't want to be recognised," Hawthorne answered.

"Of course!" Francia reflected, staring at his guest.

After a long, silent scrutiny, he burst out:

"Do you really mean to tell me you are serious, that you would gallop to Ibirai and back just to settle between us a trifling point like that at eleven at night instead of waiting until eleven to-morrow morning, just to have the satisfaction of being proved right or wrong before your night's sleep instead of before dinner to-morrow?"

"Certainly," Hawthorne asseverated. "I'll sleep better for the gallop and for having the matter off my mind. So will you sleep better."

"What energy you North Americans have!" the Dictator ejaculated. "Any Spaniard or Creole would sleep serenely and probably forget the dispute altogether."

"Well, if you are willing to fetch the book I am certainly all agog to see it."

He returned to his chair, picked up the mutilated book, and said:

"How strange are the fates of books, indeed! This, as you see, must have been the property of some French nobleman or archbishop, judging by the sumptuous green-leather binding and its gold tooling. The tale of how it reached Asuncion would be rarely interesting, could we but know it. And how strange that two copies of so peculiar

a book should find their way to this outpost in the wilderness! My copy is very differently bound. It is in brown calfskin, and the edges of the leaves are red. It looks much like that Amsterdam edition of Terence I lent you before you went exploring. You can recognise it by its Dutch appearance as soon as you see it. I'll find you a poncho."

Returning with a marvel almost as exquisite as his brother's, Francia handed it carelessly to Hawthorne and led the way into the kitchen-garden. There, close to the brink of the bank towards the inlet-lagoon, was a narrow gate or heavy door in the high brick wall. By it were two horses, both saddled and bridled, tethered to rings in the wall.

Francia patted one on the nose and stroked its neck. So standing, he said:

"You cannot miss the door, as there is only one under the portico. Here is the key."

He produced an iron instrument longer than a man's hand and proportionately heavy. Hawthorne held it up and peered at it in the dim starlight.

"Put it in the keyhole upside down," Francia directed, "and turn it the wrong way. The books are all on one shelf, I think. There are candles on the table, I am sure; I was out at Ibirai night before last. Have you flint and steel?"

"I have," Hawthorne affirmed. "Trust an old campaigner."

He pocketed the clumsy key, Francia unhitched the roan stallion, put the reins in Hawthorne's hand, and drew back the upper bolt of the gate. Before opening it, he instructed him how to knock on it when he returned.

"I'll spend an hour over my books," the great man said, "and then sit out here and meditate until you come."

Then he unbolted and set wide the gate. Once the horse had been cautiously led out, Hawthorne vaulted into the saddle, his feet instantly in the stirrups. The horse gave a plunge or two, but quieted immediately and picked his way delicately along past the horn of the inlet to the right. Passing the second and third of the Jesuits' bridges, Hawthorne wheeled to his left, passed between the Palacio and the squat Cabildo, trotted the length of the almost deserted Plaza, cantered along Calle Comercio, turned again to his

left past the church of San Blas and let out his warmed mount into a tearing gallop.

A mile or so beyond the suburbs he reined up, took off his poncho, flung it before him across the saddle-bow, and again urged the horse to its top speed.

He remembered every fork in the roads, every cross-road, and reached Ibirai promptly, reining in his blown horse as he recognised the neighbourhood.

When he made out the cottage in the star-shine, he held in his mount firmly and made him pick his way towards it at a walk.

Close to the house, belly-deep in the weeds, the stallion stumbled. As Hawthorne pulled him up, he felt the brute's hind-hoof catch on the same obstruction, and realised that he was over the log on which Rivarola had been shot.

Tethering his mount to a pillar of the portico, he stepped blindly in the direction of the door. Just as he put his hand on it there was a movement on his left, a sound between a bleat and a yelp, a sort of shrill snarl; and a human figure hurled itself at him.

Instinctively Hawthorne guarded and his fist shot out. He seemed to feel the impact of his knuckles on a human jaw; the figure crumpled with a sob, and there was a muffled thud and a thumping crack, as of a skull on the brick pavement. At the same moment he was aware of a sharp pain in his left arm and the warmth of blood running down his elbow.

He drew his hanger and bent forwards. The memory of how that flesh had felt when his fist met it and the vague perception his eyes gained of the prostrate figure fused suddenly, and he sickened with a horrible shudder as he realised that he had felled a woman.

Certainly she lay as if stunned; that much was plain, even in the dark. He sheathed his hanger. Then he fumbled for the big key, found the keyhole, opened the door, and groped his way to the table, got out his tinder-box and lit a candle; lit four candles.

A glance at his elbow, once he had torn the sleeve open, showed that he was barely scratched. He took up a candle in the only brass-candlestick on the table and went out into the portico.

As the flickering rays fell on her blank face, he recog-

nised the octoroon girl he had met the first day he reached Asuncion. At first he stared at her, almost as numb as his victim: then he knelt by her, found her pulse, listened to her breathing, and felt the back of her head, which was not bleeding.

A glint caught his eye, and he picked up a sailor's sheath-knife, its tip streaked with his blood.

He stood up, with some sort of instinct bent on reviving the girl. Obedient to this obsession, he went into the house to the water-jar, with an unformed idea of dashing water over her. He found the jar full and carried a carafe of it out into the verandah, the candle in his left hand.

The girl had totally vanished.

At once Hawthorne came to himself, blew out the candle, leapt through the door and slammed it behind him. His next thought was that if he was not quick he might find his horse gone or hamstrung. He coolly looked over the shelf, identified the book he wanted, opened it and made sure, even finding Terentianus' versified treatise. Then he blew out all the candles, found the door, went out, locked it behind him, and strode to his horse. The beast whinnied in a friendly fashion. In three breaths Hawthorne was in the saddle. Once clear of the weed-grown premises, he spurred his mount into a maddened run, and kept the terrific pace until he was aware of the dumpy tower of the church of San Blas, ahead on his right. Then only he slowed to a canter.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE CONVENTION

(1)

**A** CROSS the study-table Francia stared at Hawthorne. "Aha!" he cried. "I was right! But be not so chagrined. Anybody might err in ascribing a quotation. Do not be utterly crushed because you were wrong."

"But I was not mistaken," Hawthorne declared. "At least I have not yet looked for the line in Terentianus."

"Good God!" Francia ejaculated. "Then what is wrong with you? Tell me what has happened."

Hawthorne told.

For the first and last time he saw the Dictator raving, heard him curse and swear. Up and down the study he strode, like a caged beast, pouring out imprecations. He paused at last merely for lack of breath.

He did not pause long, but burst out again, this time in rational sentences.

"That is always the way," he raged. "Nothing but attempts at assassination. That girl came to me frenzied, burst into tears before she could speak, and her first utterance was:

" 'He ought to be shot! He ought to be shot!'

"She repeated that half a hundred times before I could quiet her sufficiently to induce her to begin her story. When I had heard it, I told her that it was for me to judge what his punishment ought to be, if he was indeed guilty. She fairly chattered at me for doubting his guilt, and when I told her that, if guilty, he should be punished severely, certainly flogged in public, she replied:

" 'He ought to be shot.'

"I did order him shot, and here is the outcome: she tries to assassinate me for having done exactly what she asked for. That is always the way: give them what they ask, suspend judgment, refuse, all three lead to the same requital: it is always attempted assassination."

He broke off, stared a moment, and asked in an altered tone:

"Did you realise that you were being attacked by mistake for me?"

"At first," Hawthorne answered, "I did not realise anything. Then for a moment I thought you had laid a trap for me. Then I perceived the truth."

"And it was only night before last," the Dictator said, "that I, alone, unlocked that door in the dark. And I am not young like you, nor quick, nor have I learnt English boxing. I should be a dead man had she leapt at me."

His tone altered again.

"Selfish creature that I am!" he exclaimed. "I talk of myself instead of binding up your arm."

"It is a mere scratch," Hawthorne demurred.

"All the same," Francia retorted, "it will be the better for a sousing with Guarani eye-lotion."

He went to the *bufete* and extracted a bottle and some rolls of old linen. As he dressed the arm, he talked.

"Always the same," he repeated, "always attempted assassination. It is getting on my nerves. So far, I sleep well, I eat well, I can entertain an armed man as I entertain you. But at times I am moved to ask you to lay aside your belt and hanger: the sight of a weapon on another man gives me the creeps. It is growing on me. I feel it. By and by I shall give way to it. I know that well."

And he talked along in the same strain of his past indifference to danger and his increasing physical alarms.

"For I feel no intellectual fear of death or of weapons," he caveated.

When the dressing was finished and they were seated, he said:

"Now show me the line."

Hawthorne turned over the leaves and presently said:

"I almost recalled the number of the line. It is 1286, in the treatise on syllables, near the end, just before the treatise on feet. It is a sort of epilogue to the former or preface to the latter. A noble passage, too, in many respects."

And he read:

*"Deses et impatiens nimis haec obscura putabit:  
Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli."*

"'A lazy and hasty man,'" Francia translated, "'will think all this too murky: books have their fates according to the capacity of the reader.'"

He took the book Hawthorne held out to him, read the whole passage aloud, translated it aloud, and remarked:

"Ill for ten months and whiling away his time writing about versification! Wonderful man! And he wrote that line."

Hawthorne said nothing.

"I own myself beaten," Francia acknowledged. "You were right; you always are, as I am always a target for assassins."

He sighed and resumed:

"Have you heard of Don Medardo Bustamente?"

"Yes," Hawthorne confessed. "I heard all people could tell me, which was not much."

"Then hear some of what I can tell," the Dictator prefaced. "That, at least, will be more."

He sighed again.

"Among the acquaintances I made at college," he narrated, "among my associates at Cordova, among my companions and cronies, by far the most charming was Medardo. To begin with, he was almost the handsomest lad among us. Besides, he was nearly the leading student; excelling easily in all studies, yet never seeming to work, never sitting late at night over his books, never rising early in the morning to con his tasks, always appearing idle, indolent, and at leisure; always with a smile on his face; always with time and inclination to listen to any friend, to lend himself to any suggestion, to take part in any jollity. He was a fluent speaker, yet never talked about himself, and was a most sympathetic listener. The impulse to confide in Medardo was, in fact, almost irresistible. He absorbed himself so completely in one's hopes and fears, worries and aspirations, said always just the right thing when he did speak, was mute so naturally and seemed so intent on what one told him, that he became an intimate almost at once. He was not only a good talker and a better listener, but he was one of those rare souls who need neither talk nor listen but are companionable through their mere presence. In all these respects he was much like Beltran. But I was younger then and more impressionable.

"He was a Bustamente of Mexico, of a family colossally wealthy through the ownership of fabulously productive gold mines. Also he was the eleventh of his mother's twenty-two sons. One divined that he had fallen in love at an unseemly boyish age with the daughter of some enemy of the family and that that was the reason why he had travelled to Lima to sojourn with one of his mother's kinsmen, an official of the Viceroy's government. It appeared that a second unfortunate love-affair or affair of gallantry had been the cause of his relegation from Lima to Cordova de Tucuman, where another of his mother's kinsmen was an ecclesiastic in high standing. Medardo entered into the life of the University and of the town as if Cordova had been the largest and gayest city he had ever lived in. No

student was richer, for an unlimited allowance to a son on his travels was nothing to the Bustamentes, to whom it would have mattered no more had all the twenty-two brothers gone wandering at once, each for himself and each scattering doubloons by the handful. Scatter his gold Medardo never did, but spend it and lend he did and with a lavish hand.

"To avoid his loans required almost superhuman secretiveness and self-control. He disarmed one's caution, divined one's needs, and before his genial smile one's pride and scruples vanished. Without saying anything, he made one feel as if he had said:

" 'What, you in need, and have not asked me for help? For shame! You would share your last *medio* with me, and you know it. So would I with you, so should I, with as good a friend as you are.'

"And at the same time it was as if he had also said:

" 'What is money to a Bustamente? Take the whole bag of doubloons. It is merely as if I were eating an orange and broke it in halves, one half for me and one for you. To me a bag of doubloons is no more than half an orange. And who would hesitate to accept half an orange from a close friend?'

"Such was Medardo.

"I was weak, I suppose. At all events, I was young, I was imprudent. At one time I should have been expelled in disgrace from the University and from Cordova had I not succeeded in hushing up a youthful escapade. Without Medardo's gold it could never have been kept secret. At another time, for a long time indeed, I should have starved to death but for Medardo's generosity.

"And what was more, never did I feel embarrassed by my obligations to him, not merely when alone and meditating on my difficulties, but not even when with him. He was all the grandee in dress, manners, and prodigality; but he was as unaffected and spontaneous as the poorest student of us all.

"Most amazing of all, though I paid to the last *maravedi* every debt I owed, paid them a *peso* at a time, some of them, though I rejoiced when the last debt was extinguished, principal and interest, and my slow savings from my profession began at last to form for me the nucleus of a prop-



erty; yet it never concerned me that I owed more to Medardo than to all my other creditors put together, never worried me that I knew not so much as whether he was dead or alive, or, if alive, in what part of the earth he might be.

"You can imagine with what alacrity, the instant I heard he was in Asuncion and wholly destitute, I hastened to relieve his necessities, to requite some part of his former goodness to me. You can hardly imagine the pleasure it gave me: in taking as in giving he was the same lordly, ingenuous being, every inch a Bustamente.

"You can conjecture easily what pleasure his company gave me. I was continually congratulating myself on my luck. After long isolation, I had within a twelvemonth become richer by you, Beltran and Medardo.

"I trusted him completely, never thought of suspecting him, and was never on guard against him.

"My rashness all but cost me my life.

"We were playing chess and had sat long over a slow, hard-fought game. It ended oddly, each with both bishops and not another piece, each with three pawns. It was totally uncertain which would win or whether we should come to a draw. I had the move, and was puzzled. He went to the water-jar, and I heard him drink three glasses in succession. Then he came on round the big table. He had often done that before. But something in the quality of his footfall made me turn.

"I was barely in time; I just did parry his thrust.

"Now conceive my position. I should have starved to death at Cordova but for him. I cannot have him shot. Every day and hour I reproach myself for keeping him in a dungeon. Yet I dare not set him at liberty.

"I am tormented with questions I cannot answer.

"Was the story true, and was his coming here a series of accidents? If so, who in Asuncion egged him on to turn on me? Or was it all a plot from the start? If so, how did the plotters enlist the Payaguás? How could any one wheedle or cajole Payaguás into so complex a piece of acting? And was it a plot of Ramirez alone with Medardo, or of Ramirez at Artigas' own suggestion? Don Gervasio has hitherto been scrupulously fair towards me, and I shall so believe him, unless proof of the contrary is irrefragable.

Or was it a plot of Ramirez and Perrichon, with or without Artigas? It is all very confusing and maddening.

"Meanwhile, my duty is to keep him in duress, whereas my inclination is all the other."

He sighed again.

Hawthorne said nothing, and Francia resumed, in a tone very different:

"I know where to find that octoroon girl. She shall be one of the first batch of colonists at Tevego."

Yet again he sighed.

His manner changed.

"I think," he said, matter-of-factly, "you might as well wait until after the convention to visit Caacupé and Atirá. Neither iron nor *yerba*-settings will run away. And you will report on both plenty soon enough."

(2)

By the beginning of May the deputies to the third convention or congress, as it was variously and indiscriminately called, had begun to pour into Asuncion from every direction. A few came up the river by slow and uncertain navigation against the current from the riverside towns about Curupaiti, Neembucú, and Herredura; from the miasmatic levels about Umbu and Tacauras; or from the dirty villages and poverty-stricken hamlets that lay between them. These were representatives of the *costeros*, the shore-dwellers, eaters of fish, parched maize and *mani* nuts, the ague-stricken fishermen and lumbermen of the stream-intersected, swampy, heavily-wooded strip of marshland between the uplands and the lower reaches of the River Paraguay. They had recourse to the river to convey them to Asuncion, because very few of them owned horses fit for a long journey or had money enough to hire post-horses. They were wild-looking men, of savage appearance and rude manners, barefoot, bare-legged, clad only in a *chiripá* and a poncho, with a small round hat, decked with greasy ribbons, jammed down tight on each one's head.

More than a hundred representatives came down the river, the easiest and quickest way of access to Asuncion from San Carlos, Villa Real, Quarepoti, and the other riverside towns, and from villages or hamlets of the interior of

Paraguay, such as Manumby, Estanislao, Yquamandiu, Belen, San Ignacio and Voquita.

But most of the deputies, fully eight hundred of them, came on horseback, all with runners afoot in attendance and some few with mounted henchmen.

There were among these semi-martial swaggerers from beyond the River Paraná in upper Misiones, Gaucho herders of Laureta, San Carlos, Corpus or Apostoles, almost Artigueños in appearance and behaviour. They rode proudly, their bare toes sticking out of home-made *potro* boots; their calves bare above them; their fringed cambric drawers flapping below their knees; their *chiripás* coarse and rough; their waistcoats tawdry with soiled and tarnished silver-lace and gaudy green and yellow embroideries; their bronzed throats sinewy and corded at the open collars of their dust-stained, sweated shirts; their blue jackets flapping, displaying red facings, cuffs and flaps; their hair thick and matted under old foraging caps.

With them others from southernmost Paraguay along the Paraná on its north bank: men of Laureles, San Cosme, Nacuti, Barboa or Trinidad, dressed like their fierce compatriots from across the river, but wearing hats instead of caps, less shaggy of eyebrows and milder of gaze.

There were country gentlemen and country yeomen from the interior; some even from far Motas, Forquilha and Minangua, more from such mid-country villages as Yuty, Ytay, Tacuava, Tabapi and Curuguatay. Their *potro* boots were seldom finished by any cobbler's stitching and mostly showed the owners' ten toes like those of the cross-river herdsmen; but they one and all boasted, wore and displayed great jingling silver spurs. Long fringed and embroidered drawers of astonishingly fine cambric, very wide and ample, hanging to the ankles; knee breeches of worn, often thread-bare velvet, sometimes green, blue or yellow, but generally a deep brownish crimson; short waistcoats sewn with tiny silver spangles, or with polished silver sequins; white jackets, usually of dimity, exceedingly short and extremely tight: such were the clothes these squires and landholders mostly wore. Most of them added as a finishing touch and display of patriotic sentiment a gleaming silk sash, of that brilliant harsh blue which had somehow become associated with the victory at Paraguay, Belgrano's capitulation, in-

dependence, self-reliance, and similar patriotic reminiscences or aspirations.

From all parts of the country came many traders, pettifogging lawyers, *yerbateros*, and shopkeepers; and more curates, all in black, with shovel-hats, and riding on mules.

But by far the majority of the deputies were *Tapé* Indians. Perhaps a third of these were completely Hispanised Guaranies: small landowners, hardly to be distinguished in appearance or behaviour from *chacareros* or *estancieros* of Catalan or Castilian extraction; curates or friars, educated at the University of Cordova de Tucuman, scarcely darker of complexion than many an Andalusian, similar in all respects to the run of country curates or town monks; graziers from lonely districts, like as possible to the generality of pampas Gauchos.

The remaining two thirds were *alcaldes* of tiny villages or of small towns. These amounted to fully half of the mounted deputies, and had each ten or twelve dependents, so that there were crowded into Asuncion or camped about it retinues aggregating something like forty-five hundred souls with the four hundred *Tapé* *alcaldes*. Mayors, aldermen or villagers, every man of them was heart and soul (minds they had none; not a trace among the five thousand of them) vowed and devoted to and sullenly enthusiastic for *Carai* Francia, the poor man's hope, the plain man's friend, the protector of the lowly, the defender of the oppressed, the councillor of the perplexed, the all-wise, all-prudent, forever mysterious All-Powerful.

All the *Tapés* and half the Gauchos, graziers, herdsmen, wood-cutters, *yerba*-gatherers, small-farmers, land-owners and *estancieros* were completely and uncompromisingly for the dread Doctor. They were earnestly and outspokenly in favour of creating him life-Dictator without preliminary discussion; of dismissing all questions of finance, trade, religion and defence, and leaving El Supremo to settle everything. The eighty deputies from the capital were completely swamped by numbers, could not make their views gain a hearing in the long weeks of haphazard caucussing which preceded the meeting of the convention. Shop-keepers, traders, merchants, lawyers, ecclesiastics, generals and ex-officials felt themselves submerged and effaced in a rising tide and accelerating flood of confidence

in the successful peacemaker, economical administrator, acceptable lawgiver, and impartial judge; of dogged, mute, unalterable resolve to exalt and obey him.

Helpless to persuade and incapable of opposition, they could only look on. Day after day and a score of times a day, in the early coolness, in the full warmth of the morning, in the sluggish heat of the late afternoon, even in the dazzling glare of noontide, the same scene would be enacted and re-enacted before their eyes. Day after day its significance sank deeper and deeper into the consciousness of all inhabitants of Asuncion.

The sound of squealing flutes and screaming fifes would make itself heard in the Market Square. From between the Palacio and the Cabildo, if it came across the bridge over the Riachuelo, having started from the camping-groves south-west of the suburban barracks; from the narrow opening where Calle Concepcion broke the long line of shop-fronts on Calle Comercio, if it came from the suburbs south of the Convent of Mercy; or down the Calle Comercio itself, past the squat flank of the Cathedral, if it came from beyond the Franciscan Monastery towards Itapúa, the procession entered the Plaza.

First came two, four or even six peons on foot, bare-footed, bare-legged and with no visible clothing save each a long, rain-faded, threadbare poncho and a narrow-brimmed, saucer-crowned hat, decked with hideously garish ribbons. Behind them the musicians, peons also and dressed like peons, blowing vigorously on their tuneless and discordant pipes, flageolets or oboes. Then two running-pages, likely enough with red handkerchiefs knotted round their greasy, crow-black, lank hair, their ponchos a shade better than those of the peons, each holding the end of a long lariat ringed to the bit of their master's charger, keeping wide apart and well before him. Their leading strings were the merest formality of ceremonial, for no horse that ever existed would dare take liberties with a *Tapé* rider. Yet the Alcalde felt that they added to his dignity.

Behind him rode two or four or even eight friends, kinsmen or brother-alcaldes, whom he had perhaps similarly attended and honoured yesterday or the day before, or might attend to-morrow.

But the feature of the procession was the Alcalde him-

self. His horse was almost concealed by the streaming and fluttering ribbons knotted on his combed and braided tail, on the buckles of the saddle-crupper, on the studs of his bridle, on his mane and on the peaks and horns of the ancient and honourable saddle, still visibly covered with what had once been green or blue or crimson velvet. As the fifes shrieked the horse pranced to the time, minced with his fore-feet, caracoled and half reared, dancing along after the local fashion.

His rider jingled the great silver spurs he never used, displaying the silver buckles of his low shoes, often of the iridescent bronze morocco leather adored by all Paraguayans. His silk hose were likely enough obviously darned and sadly in need of washing, but his silver garter-buckles gleamed and the ribbon tags of his crimson garters fluttered gaily. The ruffles of his wide-ended, much-embroidered drawers were sure to be dazzlingly clean and white, and his black velvet breeches were always open at the knees, their rows of eight or ten little silver buttons never by any chance having touched the silk-edged buttonholes since the breeches were made. Their sable hue set off his scarlet silk sash, rolled and twisted over his white shirt front, under his black velvet jacket, from the shoulder knot of which, as from his cocked hat, streamed ribbons like those of his garter-knots and those all over his horse, some red and blue, but most of that squalling yellow or unendurable pink which appealed irresistibly to the hearts of all *Tapés*.

Very stiff and erect the Alcalde held himself on his caracoling mount, fixedly he stared ahead between the animal's pricked-up ears, with all possible dignity he made his deliberate way across the length of the Market Plaza, past the front of the Cabildo, to the southwest corner, where El Supremo's *mirador* commanded the Plaza. On that balcony was set his curule chair: in it he sat with two at least of his Cabinet and secretaries by him, respectfully standing; perhaps Don Basilio and Don Andres; perhaps Beltran with Don Olegario.

When the procession was but a few horse-lengths from the window below the *mirador*, Francia invariably stood up, displaying himself to the reverential gaze of the *Tapé* Alcalde and his followers. On some days, perhaps once a week, he wore the white stockings and breeches and long,

red-faced, blue coat of a general in chief, his hair powdered and queued under a cockaded, cocked hat; oftener he wore his long sable locks falling in natural ringlets, himself from hat to shoes all in the sombre black of a doctor of laws, the garb in which his adherents most loved to see him, in which he was to them the embodiment of deep, universal, limitless wisdom, of infinite, unfathomable occult knowledge, of mysterious, incommunicable powers, of veiled inscrutable will.

Before the vision of his worshipped leader, the Alcalde reined in his horse, raised with his left hand the brass-headed, silver-headed, or even, if he was of a very important town, the gold-headed cane like a drum-major's baton, his badge of office; with his right, his ancient three-cornered cocked hat, which he had much ado to disentangle from the equally antique red or brown wig without which he would not have felt decently apparelled.

Again and again he thus saluted *Carai* Francia. The Dictator, his stern face relaxed ever so little into his reserved, yet winning smile, bowed in return. Behind him, maybe, Don Policarpo Patiños loomed vulture-wise on one side and Don Gumesindo Estagarribia bulged obesely on the other.

Fairly quivering with joy as they beheld the supreme Doctor acknowledge their master's salute, the musicians redoubled their shrill cacophonies. As the music sharpened the steed curveted anew and unceasingly. Bolt upright upon his caracoling mount all the *Tapé's* pride of horsemanship was then concentrated upon making his retreat backwards or with sidelong passagings, keeping his face more or less towards *Carai* Francia until he considered himself at a respectful distance.

Some four hundred *Tapé* Alcaldes, each eager to show himself off, each more eager to exhibit his loyalty for the *Carai*, kept Asuncion surfeited with processions, and impressed thoroughly upon the city deputies that they were and would be in a hopeless minority.

## CHAPTER XL

## EL PERPETUO

THE day set for the meeting came. Soon after sunrise the deputies began to congregate towards the Cathedral and gathered, first under its porch; then, when they had filled that, in the shade of its front and of the long side away from the sun; later even in the full sunshine of the Plaza; while a few, lazier than the most, lolled in chairs and sipped *maté* under the corridors of the shops along Calle Comercio.

When some six hundred had assembled it was announced from the middle door of the Cathedral porch by Don Gumesindo Estagarribia himself, in his most orotund tones, that a "*sala*" was present; by which, he explained, he meant a "house"; or, in other words, a quorum, that was to say, a number of deputies sufficient to warrant the commencement of proceedings; in short, a large enough proportion of the representatives to justify calling the convention to order.

Into the Cathedral the delegates trooped and seated themselves on the benches provided for the occasion; or, in the case of those who felt themselves and were considered by their fellows more important than the rest, on the hundred or two new, plain chairs disposed towards the sanctuary-rail in front of the benches.

The public were not excluded. After the deputies any and every man who could squeeze in was free to enter, watch and listen, to lean against the walls or stand anywhere in the open spaces on either side of the delegates or towards the church-doors. Among the commonality the barefoot, ponchoed peons were far too timid to thrust themselves upon their betters, and remained outside the church altogether; under the porch gathered some knots of country squires or moderately well-to-do townsmen; into the nave after the deputies flocked some two hundred spectators, Orrego, Pai Mbatú, El Zapo and other such semi-public characters remaining near the doors; better dressed men and unimportant gentlemen in the space behind the chairs; and along the walls as more than interested onlookers the



ex-generals and colonels who were not delegates, a doctor or two besides Don Arsenio Dominguez and plump Don Fructuoso Baiguer; some capitalists, among them Don Meliton Isasi, with them Don Bermudo Larreta, his bald head shining, and Dr. Bargas; on the other side of the nave the younger Mayorgas, Don Gil Romero, Don Arturo Balaguer and Hawthorne. To Hawthorne, instead of to Dr. Bargas, Surgeon Parlett had attached himself. He was fully semi-sober and in his best vein of running comment.

Immediately before the sanctuary-railing a platform had been constructed. Midway of its front stood a table of moderate size, on which was a little silver bell. Behind this table was placed the Dictator's official arm-chair. Right and left of it were disposed ordinary arm-chairs, and beyond them, at either front corner of the platform, was a small table and a plain armless chair, one for each of the two secretaries, who were already in position before the deputies entered the church.

When the delegates were seated, the cabinet of the Dictator entered and occupied the arm-chairs, Don Gumesindo on the right of the curule chair, Don Olegario on the left, Don Basilio next him and then Don Lorenzo; while to the right of Estagarribia sat Bishop Evaristo de Panés and by him Don Bernardo Velasco. These two worthies entered together, side by side; and, when the delegates beheld them, the entire assemblage rose and stood in profound silence while they proceeded to the chairs reserved for them.

Last of all, and after some little interval, the Dictator entered. At the rumour of his approach heads had craned round over shoulders to catch a glimpse of the door; at first sight of him every deputy stood up.

There was a subtle, a scarcely analysable difference between the spiritual atmosphere pervading the church while Francia passed up the nave and that which had been felt while the Bishop and ex-Intendente advanced to their places. As Hawthorne formulated to himself his impressions, in the former case commiseration and reverence, in the latter admiration and awe mingled with respect.

When Francia had taken his place he rang his bell. In the deep silence he stood up and spoke:

“Señors,” he said, “when I was Consul and summoned the convention which three years ago elected me Dictator for that term, I did not preside over the sessions of that assembly nor so much as enter this building during its deliberations; of which I know only what I learned by report. Though during its continuance no hint of any such coercion reached my ears, not long after its adjournment I heard rumours that my adherents not merely swayed and controlled the progress of debate, but dominated the assembly and overawed the delegates, practically browbeating my adversaries into silence and forcing unanimous votes endorsing all their proposals without any discussion whatever.

“I have chosen to preside over your meetings to make it certain that no such complaints are uttered by making sure that no such foul play occurs. I mean to convince all Paraguay of my impartiality by sending you all away from each of your meetings, and in particular from the last meeting, satisfied that I have shown partiality to no one and to myself least of all.

“As evidence of my impartiality you have only to look about you and recognise many of my lifelong and irreconcilable political and personal adversaries, whose presence here is already known to you, since their selection as deputies has been notorious weeks in advance. While I have, naturally, excluded from this assembly all traitors overt or covert, all agitators whose methods have been treacherous, and the most flagrant of those habitual conspirators who disgrace our Paraguayan manhood, I have included in this convention every one of my individual enemies and party antagonists whose opposition has been open, manly and fair, even if ill-advised, no matter how vigorous it has been, no matter how distasteful to me.

“As further evidence of my more than impartial behaviour towards the old Spaniards and the semi-Spanish Creoles, I wish to speak of the constitution of this body and of the allotment of delegates between the city and the country districts. The population of all Paraguay is about two hundred thousand souls. The number of deputies composing this convention is, as you all know, one thousand. That would assign one representative to each two hundred persons throughout the republic. Since there are about

ten thousand persons in the capital, Asuncion would therefore have a right to about fifty delegates.

"Now, as is well known, the country districts contain a larger proportion of my personal admirers and enthusiastic adherents, while the city harbours nearly all my enemies, antagonists and adversaries. It would, therefore, be to my advantage to give Asuncion as few deputies as possible and the rest of Paraguay as many as possible. Yet I have reflected that Asuncion contains a large majority of all the educated and intellectual men of the entire country. Therefore, I have judged it fair and just to increase the proportion of delegates of Asuncion so as to give the capital one representative for every one hundred and twenty-five inhabitants, which allots to the rest of Paraguay one representative for every two hundred and six individuals. I have thus diminished somewhat the numbers of the delegates who are likely to vote for me and to uphold my policies and have markedly increased the actual number of my opponents in this convention. Please remember this.

"As yet further proof of my impartiality, you behold here on this platform beside me our former Intendente, whom we all admire and respect, however much we deprecate his tenacity of outworn ideals; you also behold our honoured and revered Bishop, whom I now ask to sanctify our proceedings by a preliminary prayer and to utter, as freely as if I were not present, as freely as if Paraguay were still a Spanish appanage, his opinions as to your opportunities for service to Paraguay, his advice as to your duties to yourselves and your countrymen."

Francia then sat down.

Everybody gazed at the Bishop. He sat inert and apparently oblivious, alike to the speech just finished and the eyes fixed upon him. In the dead silence all continued to stare at his benignant, smiling, vacuous countenance. Not until Don Gumesindo had whispered to him, had repeatedly whispered to him for some time, did the good Bishop awake to the situation and stand up.

His all-embracing smile of kindly, somewhat fatuous, good will beamed upon the deputies. He lifted a voice cracked and quavering at first, but later steady and resonant, shrill to the end of his utterances, but entirely audible. The brief prayer with which he began was dignified

and impressive, its introductory Latin sentences majestically sonorous, its longer Spanish period appealing and uplifting, its concluding Latin, even in his weak, high voice, somehow suggesting the boom of a great bell.

His prayer concluded, he stood a moment in silence, smiling vacantly.

Just as the deputies were beginning to feel uneasy, he spoke.

He spoke in a hurried, hasty manner, and there was in his attitude, in his tones, even more than in his words, a suggestion of waning intellect, of unsettled balance of mind, which sent a thrill of commiseration through his audience.

After the customary compliments, he said:

"It is well known to you that, next after Jerusalem, where our blessed Saviour died for us, and after Rome, where dwells His Vicar upon earth, even before Compostella, here at Asuncion the grace of God is manifested in a very special manner. It may be that by the operation of His infinite mercy our Heavenly Father may put it into your hearts to vote for the abolition of the form of government which through presumptuous vainglory has for some years past been established here in Paraguay, that you may be moved to revoke the dangerous and self-willed assertion of independence, that you may proclaim your renewed allegiance to your rightful King and your subordination to our mother country and to the one true church."

He paused, gazing to right and left, as if expecting some outburst of approval. He sighed.

"Perhaps," he continued, "it is I who am presumptuous. The will of Heaven is inscrutable. It is not for us, for any of us, for any man born of woman, to pry into the mysteries of the dispensations of Providence, to conjecture or forecast the operations of Divine Wisdom. It may be that it is, after all, the purpose of the Almighty that the separation of Paraguay from Spain shall be permanent, that independence for its population shall continue, that they be governed under the forms of a republic. If so, be sure that all will be for the greater glory of God. If he chastise us we must bow our heads. It may be that our isolation from the head of God's church is a trial of our faith, and that through it, as through all His works, it may

appear that the grace of God is manifested, as it is always manifested here at Asuncion, in a very special manner. Be sure that that special grace of God is over you and among you, that however you vote, it will be by direct influence of the Divine Will, that all is decreed for the best, for us and all of us, now and forever, here on earth as eternally in Heaven."

He concluded with another brief prayer, all in Latin this time; and then, before he took his seat, he blessed the crowd with uplifted hand.

Almost instantly Francia rose, before the buzz that followed the Bishop's utterances could swell into a hum. He tinkled his bell. Into the ensuing silence he spoke trenchantly:

"That I, like the rest of us, have listened with deference to what our Bishop has just said is a further proof of my impartiality. I am about to give you a proof yet more convincing.

"But first I must speak of a question of procedure. I use my authority as Dictator to decree one small innovation of great probable utility. Our first congress, which four years ago rejected the insulting proposals of the Porteños, vindicated the patriotism of Paraguay, established a republican form of government, and selected consuls, held its sessions after the immemorial custom of *cabildos* everywhere, each member addressing the assembly seated as he was.

"This method was found to have its disadvantages. The speaker was likely to interrupt himself by stopping to take snuff, was liable to be interrupted by any other delegate, as all were alike seated and the rightful speaker had no mark of distinction or prominence.

"At the convention a year later we endeavoured to remedy this defect by providing, in front of the table of the presiding official, somewhat below him, but decidedly above the level of the seats for the delegates, a tribune, after the French fashion, from which the orator might address his fellow-members. This, in fact, did away with all danger of the speaker interrupting himself and gave him such prominence that he was even too little interrupted from the general seats.

"But this also had its disadvantages. You wasted your

time listening to interminable harangues till you were weary enough to vote any resolution, for the sake of getting off promptly at two o'clock to dinner or at sunset to supper. And though it was a minor drawback, much time was also wasted while the last speaker passed from the tribune to his place and his successor from his place to the tribune.

"Therefore, I have decided that this convention shall conduct its debates according to the customs of the parliament of England and of the legislatures and the Congress of the *Estados Unidos del America del Norte*. Each member who wishes to address the assembly shall rise in his place and make his speech there, standing. If several rise at once or seem to rise at the same time the chairman, or any temporary moderator he may appoint to take this chair in his absence, shall decide which stood up first or which is entitled to speak.

"One trifling departure from the English usage I propose: namely, that the chairman may briefly address the meeting in comment upon any member's speech or motion without going through the tedious formality of resigning the chair to a temporary substitute chosen by himself and himself becoming, for the time being, a mere delegate among the delegates.

"It will be necessary that some deputy make a motion to this effect, embodying my suggestions, that some other deputy second the motion, and that the resolution be adopted by a majority vote, those who approve rising together to signify their views, those who disapprove, if any, then rising after the others have sat down.

"That matter set in motion I have now to recur to the question of impartiality. I am extremely earnest on this point. No man shall suffer in any way for any vote he may record by rising, by raising a hand or by word of mouth. No man shall suffer in any way for anything he may say, no matter how opposed to my known public policy and private opinion. Not only no one shall be executed, imprisoned or so much as arrested, but no man shall at any time hereafter be inconvenienced or discomforted because of any act or word of his while a member of this congress. My personal displeasure, should I feel any, shall never be manifested against any deputy in any way. No man shall be made to feel, directly or indirectly, that he is in the bad

graces of the government of Paraguay because of any frank and open antagonism to me or to the existing order of things. I am here to ensure freedom of speech for all of you, and I shall do my utmost to elicit full expressions of all opinions and a fair hearing for any and every proposal.

"The first business before the meeting is the election of a temporary chairman."

Francia then sat down.

At once several deputies were on their feet.

Francia looked them over.

"Don Antonio Recalde," said he.

Don Antonio, huskily, nominated for temporary chairman His Excellency Doctor Don José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, Supreme Dictator of Paraguay.

Padre Yeguacá, curate of Curuguatay, seconded the motion, saying:

"We could have no presiding officer a tithe as efficient and fair as our incomparable Dictator."

"Do I hear any discussion of the motion?" Francia queried, gazing about.

At once he nodded, saying:

"Don Prudencio la Guardia."

Don Prudencio, all in plum-coloured velvet, as usual, made his plumpness as tall as possible, cleared his throat and began:

"Excellency, I oppose the nomination. I comprehend your Excellency's motives in presiding here, I realise your Excellency's complete sincerity. Yet I maintain that the effect of your Excellency's presence will be the reverse of what your Excellency intends. It is impossible that more than a very few will venture to oppose your Excellency in any way when face to face with your Excellency. I myself have always had the resolution to speak my mind in all debates in which I have shared. I find it requires more than usual courage to make the speech I am now making. It must be the same with others, and even more so. I venture to suggest that any other chairman would be more salutary than the chairman nominated."

Don Prudencio sat down, mopping his forehead.

"Do I hear an alternate nomination?" Francia queried.

After a silence he asked:

"Señor Don Prudencio, will you nominate a candidate?"

"I nominate Don Eustaquio Baiz," Don Prudencio rejoined, promptly, but with a gasp.

Don Ladislao Casal seconded the nomination.

Only he and Don Prudencio voted for Don Eustaquio: the rest of the delegates were unanimous for the Dictator.

"It appears," Francia announced, "that Don Gaspar is chosen temporary chairman by a vote of something over eight hundred ayes to fewer than three nays. Don Gaspar is therefore declared elected temporary chairman. As he already occupies the chair, no further formality is necessary.

"The next business before the meeting is the putting in the form of a regular motion of my proposal that each speaker addresses the convention standing immediately before the seat he happens to occupy; that any member desiring to speak shall signify his desire by rising to his feet, that if several seem to rise simultaneously the chairman shall be the judge to which belongs the right to speak."

Don Prudencio at once made the motion, which was seconded by Don Renato Jovellanos, put into writing by Don Andres Villarino, read, approved by Don Prudencio as a proper embodiment of his motion, moved as read, and adopted without a dissenting voice.

"The next business before the meeting," Francia declared, "is the choosing of a permanent chairman."

Naturally, he himself was chosen as before, Don Prudencio again putting up the name of Don Eustaquio, for whom only he and his resolute backer, Don Ladislao Casal, cast their votes, the rest acclaiming the Dictator.

When the acclamations died away several deputies rose and Francia recognised a suburban *chacarero* and local keeper of a *pulperia*, saying:

"Don Manuel Fernandez."

"If I understand aright the method of procedure in such an assemblage as this," Don Manuel said, "we have now reached the point where we can transact our most important business. I move that we now proceed to confirm and continue our present form of government."

As he sat down there arose a chorus of voices calling:

"I second the motion."

"Do I hear any discussion of this motion?" Francia queried.



Don Prudencio was instantly on his feet.

"Excellency," he said, "I maintain that this motion is too vague and indefinite, too hazy to be dealt with as a motion at all, and that, therefore, no motion is before the convention."

"The chair sustains your objection," Francia said. "Any motion is, therefore, in order."

"I wish to make a motion, your Excellency," Don Prudencio continued. "But I desire to preface it with some remarks in support of it."

"It appears to me that it is often best to clear the atmosphere of debate, so to speak, by making a motion which one knows beforehand will be rejected by an overwhelming majority, even to make a motion which one does not approve of, for the sake of avoiding discussion by showing at once how futile discussion would be. This often is best accomplished by moving the opposite of what appears most popular. With all that in mind, I wish to move that we abolish the office of Dictator and that Paraguay be governed by two Consuls, chosen yearly."

No sooner had Don Prudencio uttered these words than the Cathedral was filled with uproar, most of the delegates vociferating execrations of the proposal, many of them arising to their feet.

Francia rang his bell sharply for silence and glared at the excited rustics until all resumed their seats.

"Don Prudencio has the floor," he declared. "Have you more to say on this point?"

"No more," Don Prudencio replied. "I request some friend to second the motion."

"Before calling for a second for this motion," Francia said, "the chair wishes to make it perfectly clear to all that he shall insist upon its being seconded, shall call for discussion of it, and shall see to it that it is temperately and quietly voted upon."

"But with this assurance he begs you, Señor Don Prudencio, to withdraw your motion for the time being."

Don Prudencio bowed.

"Excellency," he said, "with the intention of making it again at the first opportunity, I withdraw my motion."

"I applaud your intention, Señor Don Prudencio," Francia said, "and I acclaim your idea. I see great possi-

bilities in it; great possibilities of swift despatch of business and of definite and permanent settling of vexed questions.

"Now let all present listen well and attend closely.

"Be it known to all of you that it is in no way incumbent upon the mover or seconder of a motion to vote for that motion. I am about to request the formal proposal of several motions which I confidently anticipate will be voted down, if unanimously voted down, so much the better. But made and seconded they must be; I ask that as a favour to the existing government and to its head.

"In the first place, you all doubtless remember the address just now made by Bishop Evaristo de Panés. With that in mind, I request some deputy to put his chief suggestion in the form of a motion."

There was a visible thrill of horror all over the church. On Francia's right Don Gumesindo nearly exploded, his face purple to his hair. Beside Hawthorne Parlett slapped his thigh.

"Old fox!" he exclaimed.

Francia rang his bell.

"Don Vicente Mayorga," he recognised.

"Have I understood your Excellency aright?" Mayorga stammered.

"You have understood me perfectly, Señor Don Vicente," Francia replied.

Mayorga stood as tall as he could, he stammered no longer, he spoke in Guarani, that all might hear and comprehend, he spoke sonorously and clear.

Don Cipriano Doméque seconded the motion.

"It is moved and seconded," Francia enunciated clearly in Guarani, "that Paraguay revoke her chief acts of the past seven years, annul the effect of the heroic valour of her sons, renounce her independence, and affirm herself a dependency of Spain, a loyal and faithful appanage and possession of King Ferdinand the Seventh. Who will vote aye to this motion?"

During this announcement, as during the dead silence that followed, Hawthorne kept his eyes on the amazed, incredulous, anticipatory, wistful faces of the Bishop and of Don Bernardo Velasco. On their crestfallen counte-

nances he kept his gaze until the volley of simultaneous nays had exploded in one mighty crash and immediately died away.

Into the ensuing impressive stillness spoke Francia once more.

"The chair now suggests," he said, "that some one embody in the form of a motion the proposals which Don Nicolas Herrera never had a chance to lay before the first convention.

"I ask this as a personal favour to myself. It is evident that Don Prudencio's plan is efficacious for eliciting the sense of the meeting in the most unmistakable fashion, and furnishes an expeditious method of laying to rest forever any ghosts of outworn ideas which may still haunt us. Will some one please make the motion?"

During the startled silence which ensued Parlett whispered to Hawthorne:

"He tries to say 'the chair,' but 'I' keeps on slipping in in spite of him."

A long period of silence appeared to elapse before any one stood up.

"Don Atanacio Cabañas!" Francia recognised.

The dignified ex-general spoke in Guarani.

"I comprehend the efficacy of Don Prudencio's advice," he said. "But I do not wonder that we all shrink from the humiliation of putting so distasteful a motion. As I am, perhaps, in less danger than any other man of being mistaken for an enemy to independent Paraguay or for a friend to the Porteños, I am willing to endure the shame of putting the desired motion."

After he had made it, Don Fulgencio Yegros came ponderously to his feet and was recognised.

"They say," began the goggle-eyed Gaucho, "that I am slow to grasp an idea. I grasp Don Prudencio's idea, and also Don Atanacio's. I second his motion."

"It is moved and seconded," Francia proclaimed, "that Paraguay give up her independence and submit herself to the dictation of the Porteños, putting herself under the protection of Buenos Aires on a footing equal with any other province as, for instance, Cuyo, Santa Fé or Entre Ríos. All in favour of this motion will please vote 'aye,' all opposed 'nay.' The nays have it. On this point the

convention is unanimous. Señor Don Prudencio, your motion is now in order."

Don Prudencio's motion to revert to consuls, elected yearly, was lost, like its two predecessors. Don Manuel Fernandez was at once on his feet and recognised.

"I move," he said, "that the form of government of Paraguay continue a dictatorship."

"A judiciously put motion," Francia remarked; "do I hear a second?"

The motion was at once vociferously seconded by half of the delegates, put and carried, only la Guardia, Mayorga, Cabañas, Yegros, Bogarin, Don Gregorio de la Cerda, Padre Caballero, General Caballero, both Casals, Doméque, de Maria, Echagüe, Don José Carísimo, Don Hilarión Decoud, Don Estanislao Machain, his brother Don Cayetano, Don Jacinto Ruiz, Don Larios Galvan, and handsome Don Lupercio Velarde voting in the negative.

Francia had them counted again and again, again and again he queried whether no adverse vote had been ignored, and only after ingenious delays calculated to emphasise their numerical insignificance, did he announce:

"The motion is carried by more than nine hundred and seventy ayes to precisely a score of nays. Nominations are now in order."

Instantly la Guardia was on his feet.

"Don Prudencio," Francia recognised.

"Before the nominations begin," la Guardia said, "I wish to formulate another motion."

"Declare it," Francia snapped.

"I move," Don Prudencio slowly bellowed in Guarani, "that instead of electing a Dictator we appoint a committee to draw up a list of a hundred names, to include the hundred Paraguayans most fit by birth, breeding, education, occupation and wealth for the office of Dictator; that, after the list is made and approved by the convention, the names be written on separate slips of paper and shaken in a dry jar, that a blindfolded child draw out one of the slips, that the man whose name is on that slip be thereupon declared for one year thereafter Dictator of Paraguay; that each year on the same date a successor be chosen in the same fashion."

Francia swelled with fury.

"Traitor," he snarled, "to my face do you dare to make such a proposal?"

La Guardia visibly quailed, flushing and paling, all atremble, and apparently sweating profusely, yet he held his ground.

"Excellency," he faltered, "I rely on the chairman's proclamation that every deputy here is free to speak his mind, that no word or act of any delegate shall cause him to feel the expressed or tacit displeasure of the existing administration or of any of its members, that opposition to the present order of things would be taken as a favour."

Francia glared and glowered, his brows puckered, his frown menacing. Then his face cleared, he even smiled.

"Quite correct, quite as it should be, Señor Don Prudencio," he said huskily and with an effort. "Your courage does you credit. Will you be good enough to repeat your motion first in Spanish, then in Guarani."

The proposal was then seconded, submitted and lost by a vote like the last, only the intrepid and audacious twenty voting for it.

Then there came to his feet a *Tapé* Indian Mayor, better clad than the generality of his brethren, wearing across his green jacket and glaring pink waistcoat a broad satin sash of brilliant patriot's blue.

Francia recognised him as:

"Alcalde Borja Nerando."

Nerando was a leather-skinned, flat-faced Guarani, very pop-eyed and stolid of countenance. He spoke slowly and most distinctly in his native tongue.

"I speak," he said, "for myself and for my brothers, for more than four hundred mayors of *reducciones*.

"In the first place, we all want to go home. We need our families, our affairs are in need of us, and we are under great expense maintaining ourselves here at Asuncion. Therefore, we wish to complete the work of this convention as promptly as possible and to disperse the moment its work is done.

"But we are willing to prolong to any extent our exile from our homes if it is necessary to do so in order to impress upon the convention our desires; to have them discussed, to have them voted upon; to have them, if possible, made law. To this end we are willing to spend our time,

even to waste our time, to eat out our hearts longing for our families, to let our farmlands and herds go to ruin, impoverish ourselves living at the Capital. We are resolved not to be browbeaten or inveigled. Let all the convention remember that.

“In the second place, then, we have had already, had had already before this convention was convened, too much convention. We came together instinctively six years ago, panic-stricken and bewildered, but feeling that we must create a workable form of government for Paraguay, or suffer the horrors of subjugation by the Porteños, by the Brasileros, or, worst of all, by the forces of the terrible viceroy of the Spanish King at Lima. We did not on that first occasion grudge our time or our expenses. Nor did we so much begrudge them two years later, when we gathered to elect consuls, nor so very much three years ago when we reassembled to elect a Dictator.

“But we now bitterly grudge every hour of our time and every *maravedi* of our cash. We have created a workable government for Paraguay and a government that works as a government should and as we want to see our government work. We are safe from conquest, invasion, raids, revolts and uprisings. We have peace; our lives are safe; we have food aplenty, clothing, ease and comfort. Entre Rios and all the rest of the continent are drowned in blood and fire. We are satisfied. We want assured permanence of our prosperity. We want freedom from the bother of thinking and voting. We want no more one-year administrations, no more three-year administrations, no, nor any five-year administrations, nor ten-year administrations. We want to be rid of the necessity of leaving our homes and estates and of wasting our time and money. No more conventions for us.

“It has been made sufficiently clear that we do not want to be governed by Spaniards or by Porteños, that we are determined that Paraguay shall be governed by Paraguayans. But we want no more *juntas* or consuls, we want one man at the head of affairs. And it is quite evident that we do not want that one man chosen by lot from the hundred Paraguayans best fitted to govern Paraguay. If it were moved we should make it equally unmistakable that we do not want that one man chosen by lot from the fifty

Paraguayans best fitted or the twenty-five best fitted or the ten best fitted to govern Paraguay. We want to elect that one man openly and by loud-voiced votes.

"Now, for the past three years Paraguayans have been divided into two classes; our Supreme Dictator has been the sole member of one class, all the rest of us have made up the other. I maintain that in respect to fitness to govern the difference between the lowest and vilest and most incompetent members of the second class and the most competent, capable, wise, upright and reliable man among us all is far less than the difference between the best other man we can produce and our present executive.

"We can and do trust him to do all that human powers can do to make impossible an invasion of our Paraguay from Peru or Brazil or from down the river. We can trust him to work steadily and cannily to have the river declared a waterway free to the ships of all nations, so that vessels from overseas may moor here at Asuncion and we not have to pay double and treble for all we import merely to enrich the greedy Porteños. We can trust him to maintain an army adequate for beating back any invasion, if invasion comes; and yet not to misuse that army to oppress the nation. What other Paraguayan could we so trust? What other Paraguayan could we trust to keep his eyes and thoughts from our daughters and wives? What other native could we trust to refuse two-thirds of the salary we voted him, turn that two-thirds into the public treasury and live contentedly on one-third of what we had accorded him? What other citizen could we trust not to accept bribes, not to make all he could on any public contract for supply of war-material? What other man could we trust to give decisions as judge merely to the facts of the case, and not by favouritism or for gold?

"I want to go home. We all want to go home and stay home. I am told that we are to hear the report of the department of war, the report of the department of justice, the report of the finance-department, the report of the custom house, the report of the tax-gathering, the report of the treasurer. I want to hear no reports. I know that all these departments have been administered honestly and economically because *Carai Francia* has overseen them all. I need no reports.

"I move that all reports be dispensed with."

The motion was seconded by half the delegates and carried in a roar of enthusiasm without a single vote in opposition.

At once Nerando was on his feet again and recognised.

"I move," he trumpeted, "a vote of complete confidence in all details of the past three years' administration of our Supreme Dictator."

This called forth from the assembly in general and from the *Tapé* alcaldes in particular deafening roars of:

*"Carai, Carai Francia, viva Carai Francia, viva el Carai, viva el Carai Supremo, viva el Carai Perpetuo."*

When this motion was unanimously carried, Nerando rose for the third time.

"I have a third motion to make," he said, "a motion which if carried will relieve us of any further necessity for absence from home, expense, worry or concern, debates or votes. There is but one man we trust and we all trust him. There is but one peaceful and prosperous country in all South America and that is Paraguay. Paraguay is peaceful and prosperous partly because of her form of government, most of all because of the matchless qualities of her Supreme Dictator.

"I move that our Supreme Dictator be declared Perpetual, that all his past and present powers and all authority necessary for the continuance of his administration and for the doing of any and every act necessary for governing be conferred upon him and vested in him for the whole term of his life and that he be herewith proclaimed Supreme Perpetual Dictator of Paraguay!"

Above the universal detonation of seconding voices Don Manuel Fernandez made himself distinctly heard, and had the honour of hearing his name announced as seconding the motion.

When it was carried the assembly yelled itself hoarse roaring:

*"Viva el Perpetuo!"*

*"Viva el Supremo Perpetuo!"*

*"Viva el Carai Supremo!"*

*"Viva el Carai Perpetuo!"*

*"Viva el Carai Supremo Perpetuo!"*



When they could yell no more somebody uttered in a far-carrying whisper:

"Move we now adjourn."

Instantly a hundred voices bellowed:

"I move we now adjourn."

As the Cathedral emptied Hawthorne remarked:

"It seems to me the proceedings were entirely fair."

"Humph!" said Parlett. "It's easy to be fair on the surface, when you've spent three years packing a convention so you've forty-nine solid votes in your favour to every one against you. Anybody could be suave and bland with a majority of nine hundred and sixty in a thousand votes. Pooh!"

## CHAPTER XLI

### RIDDLES

#### (1)

**B**Y special decree, paraded through the city to the sound of drums and fifes and proclaimed by reiterated readings of the *bando* at all important street-corners, the two days ensuing upon the adjournment of the convention were set apart as public levee-days, during which the Dictator would receive in the grand *sala* of the Palacio all persons desiring to pay him their respects.

The *Tapé* Alcaldes ignored this decree; each man of them had more than once displayed himself before the *Carai's* *mirador* and made his due reverence. They took horse before sunset and scattered north, east, and south-west. With them went most of the semi-Gauchos of Misiones, some of the *Tapé* landowners, and a few of the country gentlemen. But fully half of the deputies lingered in Asuncion to ennoble and enjoy the two *Días de Besamanos*, the Kiss-hand days, as the Spaniards called them.

These deputies crowded to the Palacio on the morning of the first day, a motley throng, well besprinkled with the sombre garbs of *Tapé* curates. The generality wore clothes of country fashion, with the lace-fringes of their cambric drawers, their much-vaunted *caleconcillos*, dan-

gling about their cotton-stockinged calves, many yellow, some blue or green, but the generality of a raw, dirty pink. They wore knee-breeches open at the knee, of corduroy velvet or of gaily dyed cloth, laced and ruffled shirts, bright jackets with brighter facings, many yellow and blue, some red and green, but the most blue and red. Their ponchos they draped over their shoulders like gentlemen's *capotes*.

Nearly half of them were garbed for the ceremony in old Spanish court-suits, with coat-tails down to their silk-stockinged calves, tight-buckled knee breeches, gold-laced waistcoats sewn with little gold buttons, and coats with huge cuff, collar and pocket flaps set off by monstrous flat pearl buttons. These suits were mostly borrowed for the occasion and Hawthorne saw the same identical suit reappear again and again upon a succession of different wearers. But some had evidently been kept in the family as heir-looms, even for generations, lovingly packed for the journey to Asuncion and worn on this day only. Of these their owners were manifestly and pardonably proud, for all that they were much more antiquated and grotesque than the borrowed costumes. These family treasures were mostly of mazarine blue "*Pano de San Fernando*," once the best and most costly cloth in Spain. Their flaps, cuffs, pockets and collars were even more portentous than the general run of gentlemen's wear in Asuncion, which was saying a great deal.

After the siesta hour of the first levee-day only a few belated country-deputies appeared; by sunset the last had left Asuncion. Therefore, on that afternoon and next morning Francia's formal reception was, except that all the salutants were male, almost a duplicate of his informal impromptu levee at the *fiesta* at Itapúa.

He wore the same thin shoes, white stockings, knee-breeches and waistcoat, the same longtailed blue coat with facings of buff. His only ornaments were the small gold buckles at his insteps and knees, the narrow gold lace on his coat, the gold hilt of his sword and his unusual ring.

The deconsecrated Jesuit church, long used as a *sala*, still showed traces of its ornate carving and gilding. The Dictator stood not at the far end of the hall, but well down towards the center. He was affable and smiling to all; to Yegros, Caballero and the other ex-generals in their

tight regimentals, to Don Bernardo and the fatuously beaming Bishop, to the Vicar-General, to the Priors, to the cringing clergy, to the old Spaniards, the Creoles, the merchants, the commonalty. For persons of very humble station were admitted in great numbers; even Orrego was there for a brief time. Most of the salutants, however, were gentry, garbed befittingly, according to their own ideas and the local fashions, all in vast coats, gaudy waistcoats, gay knee-breeches and white stockings; all with court-swords at their sides; court-swords managed with a grace and elegance which provoked Hawthorne's admiration, especially towards the bearing of the younger men. For, although there was now and then a black-clad doctor of laws to be seen, the most of the courtly gathering were the brilliant butterflies of Asuncion High-Life; the younger men more dazzling than their gorgeous elders.

With them, as garishly garbed as their grandfathers, fathers or grown brothers, were dozens of the same self-possessed children Hawthorne had wondered over at Itapuá; perfect miniatures of their parents, as well able to comport themselves, as grave, as pompous, and, already at eleven years of age, nay even at eight years old, able to manage a court-sword admirably; able to make their obeisance to the Dictator becomingly.

To Hawthorne, looking on, these little marvels of dignity and courtliness were almost the most charming feature of the levee.

Almost, but not quite. For, assuredly, the most charming feature of the reception was Don Toribio's naïve and simple-hearted joy at his complete sight, at his ability to mingle with his fellow-men, at his health, high-spirits and fine clothes. He was the only man in the assembly not a cleric, doctor of laws or doctor of medicine, who wore spectacles. Yet they did not misbecome him. He beamed through the thick lenses, radiated gladness all about him and his presence appeared to eliminate from the Dictator's demeanour any trace of reserve, all suggestion of grimness in leash. Francia looked his prospective father-in-law up and down and laughed, positively laughed, not at him, but in fellowship with his effervescent gaiety, and, as Don Toribio laughed responsively, they were, momentarily, like two lads on a holiday.

When Don Toribio passed on he joined a group including Dr. Parlett and after exchanging greetings with all about him requested the surgeon to do him the favour to call at his house the next day.

"I can come at once," Parlett proffered; "any one ill?"

"By no means," Don Toribio disclaimed; "all my family are in the best of health. I merely wish to confer with you, Señor Don Tomas, about a trifling matter of interest to myself."

Meanwhile Francia was the centre of a convocation of his favourites from the city and suburbs, and quite as agreeable to them as they to him.

When the siesta hour drew near the Dictator, who had unbent entirely to his juvenile courtiers, who had seemed to enjoy his chat with General Cabañas, with the two Casals and with Don Vicente, was plainly growing weary. There entered the *sala* the most gorgeous butterfly of them all, the superlatively handsome and universally popular guitarist, Don Venancio Lopez. He came forward with his most engaging demeanour and smile, and the Dictator eyed him almost with approval, certainly with kindness.

Suddenly, when he was not three yards from Francia, Lopez whipped out his rapier and made a powerful and well-aimed lunge full at his breast.

It was Beltran, standing next his chief, who knocked up the sword, which tore a knot of bullion from one of the Dictator's epaulettes.

Francia never flinched or changed countenance. Nor did he speak until his assailant was overpowered and bound; keeping silence, in fact, through a long, awkward wait until four soldiers entered in charge of Ortellado and haled their prisoner off. As they went, he briefly said:

"Put him in the first empty cell under the cavalry guard-house."

To the assembly he spoke soothingly, winding up by saying:

"I am about to dine and take my siesta. I particularly request all of you to return here after the siesta hour and urge all your acquaintances to do the like. I do not want my levee-day marred. Let us all conduct ourselves as if nothing had happened."

To Beltran he said:

"Send word to Ortellado to have him shot an hour after sunrise. Be sure he has a priest, but let no one else speak to him."

(2)

When Parlett called at the Velarde Mansion the next morning Don Toribio greeted him even more effusively than usual, beamed at him through the large horn frames of his spectacles, and after they had partaken of snuff, *maté* and a glass of wine apiece, and had lighted their cigars, he said:

"Señor Don Tomas, I have a sin on my conscience. A sin not of commission, but of omission. You will recall that, after you restored to me my sight, you were so courtly as to refuse any payment for your invaluable services to me, yet so kind as to accept a trifling gift as an inadequate expression of my gratitude.

"My sin was this: that gift was not half enough. For when I made it, I was thinking only that you had enabled me to see the world, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the landscape, my family, my fellow-men. I had not yet realised your most precious gift to me. I realise it now, and to enable me in some small degree to requite it, to some extent to indicate my sense of obligation, I beg of you to let me relieve my mind and be at peace with myself by accepting this also."

Here he thrust upon the astonished doctor a second big handful of golden doubloons.

Before Parlett could find his voice, he leaned toward him and explained:

"Señor Don Tomas, do you realise what you have done for me? You have enabled me to recognise a pretty girl when I see one."

At Dr. Bargas' wine-shop that afternoon Parlett was boasting of his doubled fee and narrating and repeating every detail of the interview. No one could guess who was the pretty girl Don Toribio meant.

Hawthorne was idling his afternoon at the wine-shop, feeling low-spirited and too unhappy to occupy himself actively at anything. His visits to Cecilia had been on the whole depressing. To be sure, she was much better off

in the *cuartel* since the first convoy of prisoners had been deported to Tevego, as that had swept the prison-yard of the trulls and hussies and left her not only with more free room, but with less unpleasant fellow-prisoners. Yet, while she expressed her gratitude formally, Hawthorne felt as far away from her as ever. In such a mood the wine-shop was his only resource. Consulted by the gathering there, he could throw no light upon the subject.

But he learnt the truth before bedtime.

As usual, a delightful *tertulia* half-filled the *patio* of the Mayorga mansion. After a general cross-fire of impromptu verses mixed with puns and good-natured raileries, the party spontaneously broke up into small groups, devoting themselves to cigars and conversation. Hawthorne was conversing with Carmelo and Rafael, when Carlota and Leite crossed the courtyard and said to their brothers:

"Desiderio wants to speak to you."

They then occupied the vacated chairs and Leite began talking to some one on the other side of her.

Carlota, after some rambling chatter, said to Hawthorne:

"Señor Don Guillermo, you remember how surprised I was when you first described to me the customs of your country and told me that many times there a young man and a young girl are friends and comrades together just as if they were two girls or two men?"

"Yes, indeed, Señorita," Hawthorne assented. "I recall your comical dismay, as it were, over the possibility."

"You told me also that either of such a pair of friends would rejoice over the other's wedding just as if both were men or girls?"

"Certainly," he confirmed.

"Well," sighed Carlota, "I have found it all possible, even in Asuncion. You and I are such a pair of friends, I conceive, Señor Don Guillermo."

"I am much flattered," Hawthorne replied, "to hear you say so. We have had many pleasant hours together. You have taught me much Guarani, some Spanish, and a little guitar-music, for all of which I am grateful. But I have been more grateful for the frank comradeship I have had with you, almost as with Carmelo. And I am most grateful of all for your expression of how you feel for me and for this opportunity to express my feeling to you."

"Bravo!" cried Carlota. "I was so sure of you that I made Papa and Mama and all of them keep as quiet as mice, so that I might have the satisfaction of telling you myself, like a New England girl. I am going to be married to-morrow morning at the church of the Incarnation. You are to be there, as almost a member of the family. Papa says so, and I told the boys to make sure."

"To-morrow morning!" Hawthorne exclaimed, under his breath. "How can that be? I see no signs of preparation or of excitement. This *tertulia* is like any other. I should expect bustle, not only to-night, but for days past, and scores of presents and crowds of friends to congratulate you."

"Certainly," Carlota agreed, "that is what I almost miss. But Papa says that when a girl is lucky enough to make such a match she ought to be willing to put up with her bridegroom's whims, even if he insists that no one must know beforehand except the family and gets the Bishop to dispense with the banns, and will have no presents, because he says he can give me all the presents I need and more than all Asuncion could, which is true. I am satisfied, since that is what pleases Toribio."

"Toribio?" Hawthorne repeated, conjecturingly.

"Yes," Carlota rejoined, sedately. "I am going to marry Don Toribio Velarde."

(3)

The very day following Don Toribio's wedding festivities, a messenger from the Palacio brought him a note, couched in terms as courtly and formal as if he and Francia had been in all respects equals, requesting the favour of an interview at his house if it suited his inclination. Not long after despatching an affirmative reply his servants announced the Dictator attended by Don Beltran Jaray. Both were in tight bright new regimentals and both were very pale. Beltran, who spoke no word except the customary greetings and farewells, acted as the best friend traditionally indispensable in Asuncion to any suitor when making his formal request to his prospective father-in-law. On their side Francia did all the talking.

They were received by Don Toribio and his bride, Car-

lota, as much the mistress of her mansion as if she had been married ten years and as if she were ten years older than her step-daughter instead of ten years younger. Her husband asked her advice as if she were the mother of his daughter and they had evidently talked the matter over thoroughly, for, in the course of remarking that they had ceased to exist, she stated his reasons for delay far more tersely and neatly than could have been possible for Don Toribio himself. He dotingly beamed over her utterances, as if they had been entirely original with her, and agreed with this reflection of his own ideas that there were now no causes for hesitation nor any obstacle to Ventura's marrying a life-Dictator.

After the exchange of the formal pledges, after a second round of *maté*, wine and cigars, Francia was plainly meditating his departure.

"I presume," he said, "that there is no reason why we should not have our weekly game of chess to-morrow."

"None whatever," Don Toribio assured him, heartily.

"Ventura, then," the Dictator summed up, "can have twenty-four hours to make up her mind on what day she would like to be married."

Don Toribio assenting, the gentlemen exchanged pinches of snuff and Francia and Beltran took their leave paler, if anything, than when they came.

On remounting in front of the house Francia turned to the right, kept on round the wall of the Velarde garden, forced his lean sorrel mare to wade the upper end of the little slough behind the orchard hedge, kept on southeastwards till they passed the church of San Roque, fetched a wide circle through the orange-shaded lanes south of that church, came back through the deep grass-banked street below the Franciscan monastery, turned past the Mayorga mansion and pulled up before the abode of Don Antonio Recalde, next door.

A mulatto, with two good eyes, was lounging under the archway. At sight of the Dictator he fairly sprang to his feet with something like smartness.

Francia beckoned.

Instantly the breathless mulatto was at his horse's head.

"*Bribon*," the Dictator demanded, "is your master at home?"



"Yes, *Carai*," the fellow answered, cringing.

"Now hearken to me, *Bribonazo*," Francia rasped, "and pay attention. If you forget, vary or add one word, I shall have you shot. You see this gentleman with me? He is Don Beltran Jaray. Go to your master and tell him that Don Beltran, accompanied by a friend, craves the favour of an interview. Be quick with his reply."

Before Beltran's tall roan began to fidget and champ his bit the messenger returned. Don Antonio would receive Don Beltran at once.

Which he did with commendable suavity and self-command though a good deal shaken by the sight of the "friend" accompanying Don Beltran. Doña Tules did the honours of her *sala* with some little trepidation.

After the usual compliments and refreshments Beltran presented his second formal request for Angelica's hand. Don Antonio looked grave and embarrassed.

"Don Beltran," he said, "I see no reason for beating about the bush. You are the most desirable son-in-law in Paraguay, and I acknowledge, as once before to you, the pact between myself and your good father. But I may as well say at once that I regard that compact as cancelled."

Beltran said nothing, but Francia bristled up angrily.

"Do you mean to imply," he demanded, "that you rebuff a suitor who brings me with him as best friend? Do you dare?"

Don Antonio could not meet fully Francia's browbeating stare: but he tried, tried manfully.

"I should dare much for Angelica," he said gently. "I love her best of my daughters, I admit, and have her welfare close to my heart. I fully intended to give her with my blessing to Don Beltran, and was expecting with impatience his renewal of his former suit.

"But there cannot be any true happiness in marriage without love. I find, to my surprise, that Angelica is deeply in love with an entirely different person. That altogether alters my views as to marrying her to Don Beltran. Don Beltran himself, who has the kindest feelings towards Angelica, will, I am sure, agree with me."

"I am sure he will," Francia burst out, "I am sure I do. This is an unexpected turn of events. But you are perfectly right. I agree with you entirely."

He pursed his lips and nodded.

"Don Beltran," he continued, "I conceive that there is nothing for us to do but make our farewells."

Beltran bowed.

"And who," the Dictator queried, "is the lucky lover?"

Don Antonio glanced at his wife and then replied:

"Angelica's intended is Don Desiderio Mayorga."

"Congratulate him from me," Francia trumpeted, "and from Don Beltran. Assure him of our goodwill. If necessary, we shall both attend Señorita Angelica's wedding as an earnest of our amiability and approbation."

After more *maté*, wine and cigars they took their leave.

(4)

The next afternoon Francia and Ventura faced each other across the chess-board, under the shadow at one side of the narrow *patio*, while near the other end of the same side Don Toribio lolled in his arm-chair, Carlota, with her embroidery hoop, in a smaller chair beside him.

Francia regarded the board.

"I am playing badly," he said. "You have won the exchange on me twice. With our usual odds, that leaves me one bishop against two rooks. I shall have to consider the game deeply.

"Meanwhile as I ponder let us talk."

"As you please," Ventura agreed. She had her embroidery hoop in hand.

"Have you considered what day would suit you for our wedding day?" the Dictator queried. He looked almost handsome as he spoke, for his blue uniform coat became him, and his hair, powdered and drawn back into a queue, made his face appear comparatively young and pink.

Ventura drew her thread tight, regarded him calmly and replied:

"We met on Saint John's Day," she said. "Let us be married on Saint John's Day."

"I had hoped," Francia demurred, "that you would name an earlier date."

"No earlier date would really suit me," Ventura rejoined, "and it is not long till Saint John's Day now."

"Saint John's Day therefore," said Francia, "let it be."

(5)

Not many mornings later, as she was leaving the Cathedral porch after early mass, Ventura encountered Beltran. She was a trifle surprised to see him there and at that hour; much more that he was on foot; for she had never seen him in the streets of Asuncion except on horse-back.

Though she was unfailing in her churchgoing and as regularly punctual day after day at the same hour and spot as the shadow of the Cathedral tower, Beltran seemed astonished at sight of her. He stood and gazed without any word or gesture of greeting as if she were an apparition.

Ventura eyed him calmly as she approached him and, when quite near, she said:

"Señor Don Beltran, are you asleep in broad daylight? If you are awake, you are discourteous."

Beltran flushed, whipped off his plumed cocked-hat, bowed low and apologised, saying:

"Señorita, I was indeed remiss to look at you without any salutation."

He bowed again.

Most church-going *Asuncianas* wore their *rebozos* so completely muffling head and face that scarcely even one eye was discernible. Ventura never did. Her face had been entirely visible as she emerged from the archway of the porch. Now she pushed her *rebozo* still further back, so that her head was almost entirely free. Two crimson blossoms emphasised the glossy splendour of her dark hair. She surveyed Beltran reproachfully.

"Look!" she repeated after him. "You did not look, you stared as if you had never set eyes on me before."

Beltran paled after his flush.

"That is precisely how I felt," he said. "You appeared to me, Señorita, as if I had never seen you before, as if I then saw you for the first time."

"That sounds very strange!" Ventura remarked.

"It felt very strange," said Beltran simply.

"We saw each other daily for months on the river," she commented; "we should be used to each other's appearance after all that time together on that little brig."

"How well we came to know that brig!" Beltran exclaimed.

"Every timber and spar of her," Ventura concurred. "Every rope and bolt."

"And yet," Beltran spoke vehemently, "if we had sailed in her not on the river but in mid-ocean, if she had burned or foundered beneath us, if from some lonely treeless, waterless rock, from some frail boat, from some bit of wreckage, we had watched for her final disappearance, knowing she could never be again to us what she had been, might she not have appeared to us altogether otherwise from what we had ever seen her before, might she not have seemed even as if we beheld her then for the first time?"

Ventura's glance wandered.

"Señor Don Beltran," she said, "you speak in riddles."

But her cheeks were redder than usual as she dropped him a low courtesy and passed on.

## CHAPTER XLII

### DISSOLUTION

#### (1)

THE day after Hawthorne's return from Atirá and Caacupé was bewilderingly eventful. He had ridden in the night before too late to make his report to the Palacio but presented himself promptly in the morning. Francis received him graciously and listened to his glowing accounts of the condition of Yabi's plantations and of Borda's iron-smelting, taking snuff at shorter intervals and in larger pinches.

"Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "all this has a convincing sound and promises well. Sup with me to-night at our usual hour and tell me more."

At the entrance to the *patio* Benigno Lopez, waiting his turn for an audience, stood talking to Beltran. The lieutenant greeted Hawthorne in rather a constrained and abstracted fashion, markedly different from his normal manner.

"Is he ill?" Hawthorne queried, as Don Benigno strode off to make his report to the Dictator.

"Impossible!" Beltran exclaimed. "No Lopez is ever ill. Since Irala's days they ride and fight like fiends, wallow in debauchery from boyhood on, and, unless killed by accident, die of old age, hale as my grandmother. They never know pain, ache or ailment. Benigno is like the rest of them."

They watched him pace the length of the courtyard, saw him salute and then, all in a breath, saw the flash of his unsheathed sabre, saw him rush venomously towards the seated figure; saw Francia, all with one motion, come to his feet, disembarass himself of both table and chair and swing his blade free, saw sabre meet sabre and heard the ring of steel on steel.

Both started to run and simultaneously Bopî, a palm-wood club in his hand, appeared noiselessly from under the rear arcade.

The clash of sabres rang faster and faster. Hawthorne, as he ran, saw Lopez jumping about like a terrier worrying a woodchuck, but saw Francia's left hand up and down like a conductor's baton.

Before any of the three could reach him the sword flew from the lieutenant's hand and clattered tinkling all across the pavement.

Francia aimed a terrific slash at the assassin's head, but swung the sabre aside in midair.

Lopez leaped back, panting, and they seized him by either elbow.

He uttered no sound.

Francia exclaimed:

"The older man but the better fencer! I'll see the eclipse of 1839 yet in spite of all of them."

Zorilla and the guard came running not much behind Beltran. When Lopez was bound Francia said:

"Take him out and shoot him at once. Don Beltran, count their cartridges and see they use no more than three."

Hawthorne stood numb, too dazed to walk off.

The Dictator sat down heavily and glared at him, breathing hard.

"My own officer!" he cried. "Whom shall I trust? Whom can I trust?"

Then he laughed mirthlessly, staring at the pavement.

Presently he raised his head.

"Do not forget our supper to-night, Don Guillermo," he said; "we must ignore life's inevitable dangers and try to be calm and gay."

Hawthorne bowed himself off.

(2)

After the siesta hour Hawthorne strolled to Dr. Bargas' wine-shop and found there a brilliant throng of expectant idlers. Against its background of raftered roof, rough walls, tiers of casks, heaps of *tercios*, piles of *serons* and ranks of *petacons*, the picture his fellow-conspirators made never failed to strike him as novel and startling. He found the impression as keen as ever. The black garbs of the few doctors of laws and fewer priests served merely to emphasise the gaudy hues of the gay velvets and satins, the shine of many white silk stockings, the glitter of gold-laced waistcoats and of their tiny buttons, of knee breeches and shoe-buckles, of sabre-guards and rapier hilts, the brilliance of the reds and greens, the yellows and blues of the rich stuffs. The parti-coloured spectacle had a new dominant note, for, besides Dr. Bargas, half-seated on the table, half standing by it, the white embroidery on his crimson poncho the most conspicuous feature of the picture, was Don Lupercio Velarde.

Hawthorne greeted him even more ceremoniously than the rest and expressed his amazement at seeing him there.

"Oh, I am a patriot," Don Lupercio replied, tossing back his becoming grey locks from his youthful pink face. "I am a patriot and first of all for the *patria*; therefore, I have also been for the existing government, whatever that might be. But am I to stand by and see this *tinterillo* marry my niece? Not I. Therefore, let us conspire!"

"To that end," spoke Cabañas, "let us carefully avoid any appearance of order or of meeting, but let the meeting now come to order."

There was a momentary silence; then Don Atanacio continued:

"I conceive that our most pressing business is to hear Don Guillermo."

Hawthorne thereupon gave a succinct account of what

had been accomplished during his absence towards the accumulation of materials for powder-making and gun-casting, of the state of affairs he had found at Caacupé and Atirá and of the prospects for the future.

He wound up by saying:

"Powder we shall have in plenty, to all appearances; cannon-balls are a simple matter, or will be long before we have the cannon to hurl them. As for artillery, I do not propose to bother with four-pounders at all. I mean to begin with six-pounders and to keep at them till I have four good ones, entirely dependable. By that time I shall have put all my experimental failures well behind me. Then I shall proceed to cast four eight-pounders and four twelve-pounders. I am certain I can complete them in good time. Finally then I shall essay my most difficult task, the making of a pair of large cannon.

"I shall not attempt sixteen-pounders at all, but shall try at once to provide us with two eighteen-pounders; so that, even if he can use his two sixteen-pounders, which I greatly doubt, we shall have the advantage of him in both weight of metal and range of fire; with one eighteen-pounder at the upper ford of the Salado and the other at the head of Lake Ipacaray, we should not fail to hold back his troops whichever way he concentrates. Once they are repulsed we should be able to advance promptly and steadily."

When he paused there was again a silence, a longer silence, an embarrassed silence.

Don Hilarion Decoud sighed a deep sigh.

"We must remember," he said, "that in one respect our antagonist has become more formidable. One of his many factors of strength has been the belief among the Guaranies, ever since he was voted supreme, that he had been made omnipotent by enactment. Now, with the same simple faith in the power of the suffrage, they believe that he has also been made immortal by election. As El Perpetuo they believe he is placed above the reach of accident or disease, that nothing can kill him now."

Don Porfirio Somellera puckered his brows and spoke slowly.

"It seems to me," he said, "that your plan for cannon-casting was different the last time you explained it."

"Who does not alter his plans as time goes on?" Hawthorne retorted. "What plan worth having does not improve as it unfolds?"

Gamarra was tugging at his moustache and making noises like whispered snorts. He burst out:

"It is a year since you set this conspiracy on foot. And you bid us wait the full span of a second year, full twelve months yet, before we are to see your cannon ready and to adventure the terrific risk of raising the standard of revolt and taking the field from Atir. The time is too long. We have escaped detection for a whole year by a series of miracles, by countless miracles. It is too much to hope for that we shall remain coherent and unsuspected for a second year. The chances of exposure are so many that we may say we are certain to be betrayed. No matter what our courage and resolve we could not last another year. We should act more promptly."

"Besides," cut in Don Estanislao Machain, "the plan is not only slow, but clumsy. Don Guillermo devises *yerba* plantations to make natural the casting of large iron pans, which iron pans are to serve as a blind for the concealment of ingots of iron, which ingots are to be used to cast cannon. We should work out a plan not only quicker, but simpler."

Hawthorne was nettled and showed it. "If any one," he said, in a controlled voice, "has a plan simpler and more expeditious, I shall be pleased to hear of it."

"I have such a plan," spoke Don Lupercio, "a plan already known to all present except yourself, Seor Don Guillermo, a plan approved by all."

"Not by all," Cabaas interjected, gently.

"True, Don Atanacio," the handsome *estanciero* admitted; "you registered your disapprobation, as did a few others. But it is heartily approved by a great majority of us, including Don Bernardo."

The aged ex-Intendente sighed.

"Under the circumstances," said he shamefacedly, "I must allow that it appears the most hopeful."

"Far and away the most promising," Don Lupercio resumed, "and, in order that I may make myself clearer, permit me, Seor Don Guillermo, to approach the point indirectly.



"Our efforts are aimed towards the establishment in Paraguay of a genuine republic? Is not that true?"

"Certainly!" Hawthorne assented

"In any republic truly worthy of the name the majority rules. You admit that?"

"I more than admit it," Hawthorne replied, "I uphold it."

Don Lupercio swung his silver-mounted horn-tip tinder-box by its silver chain.

"I know the proverb," he said "But let us assume, for the sake of simplicity, that we are as certain to succeed as the sun is to rise to-morrow. Imagine us fully successful, what becomes of our antagonist?"

Hawthorne frowned.

"He might be killed in battle," he answered, "he might escape, he might surrender, he might be captured."

Don Lupercio smiled grimly.

"Four possibilities," he said. "Let us pass by the first for the moment. As to the second, escape is unthinkable. For which way could he escape? In the wildernesses of the Chaco or of the Brazilian forests he must perish of disease or privation even should he avoid the lurking savages; anywhere down the river he would be shot as soon as recognised, and, anyhow, once the despot became a hunted fugitive Lopez would turn against him and never let him past Neembucú. Which leaves us to consider but one contingency. The man alive in our hands, what would happen to him then?"

Hawthorne frowned more darkly.

"We might permit him to go into exile," he said, "we might banish him to Forquilha or Voquita, we might seclude him at Curuguatay or Minangua, we might permit him to retire to Ibirai as during the time of the second *junta*."

"We might," put in Don Eustaquio Baiz, "but we most indubitably would not perpetrate any one of those several follies."

"We certainly should not!" chorussed Gamarra, Yegros, Machain and a dozen more.

"We unquestionably should not," Don Lupercio affirmed, "and for the best of reasons, Señor Don Guillermo. That is, that in a republic the majority rules. If he sur-

rendered or were captured we should have him shot as he has had shot scores of men better than he. We Paraguayans are unanimously agreed on that. The admission to which I have been leading you, Señor Don Guillermo," he continued suavely, "is that in any case whatever our conspiracy leads to the tyrant's death, that, in plain words, stripped of ambiguities and obscurities, our conspiracy, the conspiracy you set on foot, is a plot for the death of Dr. Francia."

Hawthorne meditated in the ensuing silence, nodded and spoke huskily:

"You are entirely convincing, Señor Don Lupercio," he said, "but I do not flinch. I have come almost to love the man, but I hate the tyrant. I hold that no one man should stand in the way of a nation's freedom. I bow to the will of the majority: that is to say, if the circumstances you forecast ever come to be actualities, if then a majority votes as you prophesy, I shall acquiesce."

Don Lupercio bowed to Hawthorne and cast a triumphant glance round the assemblage.

"We are then banded together," he resumed, "to compass the death of Dr. Francia. Why go about it in a slow, laborious and risky fashion, when we could proceed by a plan safe, certain, easy and quick? Pray bear with me, Señor Don Guillermo, and hear me out. To begin with, let me assure you that collectively and individually, we, your associates here present, have had no complicity in any of the several attempts made in the past year upon the Dictator's life, nor any foreknowledge of any one of them. That made clear, let me admit that plans for our enemy's removal have been repeatedly broached, discussed and rejected, of all which proposals I was informed soon after joining your league. These numerous and varied projects were all disapproved for two reasons. In the first place, they promised no better chances of success than the attempts at revenge of Don Venancio Lopez and such as he. In the second place, each involved the self-sacrifice of the chief actor, for no one could invent a plan by which the instrument of vengeance, even if successful, could hope to effect his own escape. Therefore, though more than one of us burned to offer up his life on the altar of liberty, we have repressed the ardour of all such enthusiasts, even when

six devoted patriots offered to vow themselves to a series of well-considered efforts.

"It has remained for me, Señor Don Guillermo, to devise a plan which cannot fail, after the accomplishment of which the saviour of Paraguay is certain to escape unscathed and free."

Hawthorne's disgust was plain to read on his face. The speaker's complacent periods he interrupted indignantly.

"Señor Don Lupercio," he said, "I decline to listen further. I am amazed to hear you avow the abetting and contriving of assassination."

"Señor Don Guillermo," the *estanciero* spoke gravely, "I beg of you to hear me to the end."

"I shall hear nothing more from you," Hawthorne retorted hotly, "unless you answer me one question, and I'll hear no more then, unless the answer is convincing."

"Your question, Señor Don Guillermo?" came the courtly response.

"Why," Hawthorne queried insistently, "have you discarded an honourable project for insurrection and open warfare in favour of an underhand scheme for cowardly assassination?"

Don Lupercio turned, selected a cigar from the small *petacon* which stood on the table, leaned over to the candle beside it, lit his cigar, puffed meditatively and then urbanely broke the uncomfortable silence.

"Because, Señor Don Guillermo, even should your organisation succeed, as I believe it would, it would, along with its vast and worthy objects, succeed in ruining my niece together with her husband. My plan will forestall his ever becoming her husband, which is precisely what I am most concerned to prevent."

Hawthorne stood up.

"I decline," he said, "to be any longer the associate of men who subordinate public policies to private interests, still more of men who meditate assassination, or of men who abet either."

His abhorrence and his intention to depart were equally unmistakable.

The chorus of expostulation, deprecation and dissuasion

had little effect on him; the general outcry that in this case private interest tallied completely with public policy rather urged him to begone. That he remained and reseated himself was largely due to some tantalisingly inscrutable meaning he read in the silent glances of Don Gil and Don Arturo, but most of all to the pathetically appealing tone in which Don Bernardo besought him to listen to the end. This kept him seated and mute in spite of a surging tide of inward repugnance.

Don Lupercio maintained his complacent calm.

"Señor Don Guillermo," he went on, "our arch-enemy has his informers everywhere in Paraguay. 'Fight the devil with fire' is a good old proverb. We also have many spies dogging him; a perpetual body of watchers about the Palacio, and more than one informant as to what goes on within it. We have learned that it is a regular feature of the Government-House routine, invariable as the roast pigeon and wine served its master for supper, that two of his best horses, two of the speediest and most mettlesome horses in Paraguay, are each night saddled, bridled and tethered just inside the small side gate of the kitchen-garden, close to the top of the bank which slopes down to the Riachuelo. The readiness of these horses is never neglected. Every single night, without exception, this is done. They are always ready, always at the same spot.

"We have also learned that the strong door of the gateway, which fits accurately into the opening in the wall, is fastened only with the two bolts, one near the bottom, the other near the top. It is provided with a lock and a pad-lock, but neither is ever locked until after the Doctor has gone the round of the Palacio, secured or tested all the other doors and listened for poor petitioners at his window under the *mirador*. The gate of the kitchen garden he invariably locks last of all the entrances to the Palacio.

"It is plain then that any one supping with him might kill him at supper or over the chess-board and make his escape on one of the horses kept ready, since the gate may always be unfastened from within.

"It is known to us that you yourself rode one of these horses from the gate of the kitchen garden to Ibirai on the night of May 4th. You were not challenged or interfered with. This proves either that he has no watchers with

orders to seize any man except himself attempting to leave the Palacio on one of these horses, or else that if such watchers are posted they have instructions to let you pass.

"No Paraguayan is as quick with a pistol as our arch-enemy, few are as quick with a sabre. But you, Señor Don Guillermo, as you have often demonstrated in friendly tests of rivalry, are quicker with both kinds of weapon than any man in this part of the world. You are admitted to sup with the autocrat, to sit opposite him while he concentrates all his attention upon his chessmen. You came to Paraguay to overthrow the despot, you have organised a conspiracy whose only reason for existence is to compass his death. You burn to rescue Paraguay from the tyrant. I have pointed the way, only help us as I have outlined and your success is certain. Your escape, too, is assured. You have only to press on from Ibirai to Atirá and return the next day to accept the plaudits and acclaims which the gratitude of Paraguay redeemed will shower upon her deliverer. The prisons will be set open and you may point out as many prisoners as you choose for permanent liberation."

The suggestion of self-interest in this rather clumsy allusion to Cecilia acted as a spark to fire Hawthorne's New England conscience and explode his repressed abomination of what he was hearing.

Angrily he leapt to his feet.

"What?" he cried. "You not only talk assassination to me, but select me as your tool? You imagine me an assassin?"

"Not an assassin," Don Lisardo soothed him, his voice, even more than usual, clerically orotund. "Not an assassin, Señor Don Guillermo. We figure you as the saviour of Paraguay."

Hawthorne, his face eloquent of loathing, made to depart.

Again he was persuaded to delay, and again largely by sympathy for Don Bernardo's distressed eagerness.

There followed a lengthy, tumultuous and acrimonious discussion, participated in by nearly every one present except Cabañas.

Hawthorne was completely baffled. He could not make one of his hearers appreciate his point of view or comprehend his attitude of mind, or so much as credit that he

really felt as he talked. To them any one method of ridding Paraguay of Francia seemed quite as honourable as any other. Assassination or revolt they judged merely by valuing their comparative difficulty or hazard.

Over and over he brought forward arguments such as:

"Can you not see that men capable of organising a provisional government, starting an insurrection and pressing on to victory in open warfare prove themselves capable of giving a republic the right sort of management; whereas men who stoop to plot assassination give no promise of any powers of statesmanship or administration?"

Over and over one or the other of his associates replied somewhat in this fashion:

"Can you not see that Paraguay cannot be free without this man's death, no matter what else happens; that his death frees Paraguay without anything else happening?"

When they were unable to move him and realised they had failed, his auditors were dazed and hysterical, incredulous that he could help them, could accomplish in a moment all they sought for, and yet would not set his hand to what they looked upon as an easy and simple task.

When the deadlock was complete Parlett appeared in the doorway. Into the instant silence he spoke:

"I can keep watch a moment here out of the tail of my eye. You'll get no further forward, Brother Jonathan. You might just as well give it up. They'll never understand you or you them. They're Spanish and you're Saxon. That's all there is to it. It's the nature of a Spaniard to be secretive and treacherous, it's the nature of a Saxon to be open and above board. You can't alter their natures or yours. Better give it up."

That brought Hawthorne finally to his feet.

"I refuse any longer," he said, "to associate with assassins. Conspire without me. I bid you farewell."

"You may find it easier," spoke Somellera, "to bid us farewell than to depart."

"Who dare try to stop me?" retorted Hawthorne, truculently.

"Oh, let him go," cut in Machain; "we can do better without him, as I have told you before. He is not the only chess-player in Paraguay, not the only supper-guest at the Palacio. Let him go, Porfirio!"

"You are mad, Estanislao," Somellera rejoined. "Let him go straight to the Palacio to hand the tyrant a list of our names?"

"Señor Don Porfirio," Hawthorne retorted indignantly, "I have taken the same oath of secrecy which binds you. No word, look, act or silence of mine shall ever help betray or incriminate any one of you."

"Does any one believe this farce?" Gamarra roared. "Manifestly we have here a tool of the despot, as I have maintained from the start. His cunning has led us on, but his reluctance to be of real service, the first time a real chance offered, has unmasked him. Shall we let him escape to inform on us?"

"Rogelio!" spoke up Dr. Bargas. "What do you intend?"

"I purpose, Jenofonte, to make certain his silence by killing the traitor here and now," Gamarra blustered, "and the rest are of the same mind."

"You'll kill no guest of mine on my premises," Dr. Bargas declared.

"Pooh!" snarled Gamarra. "You've had brawls here before this, Jenofonte, and corpses carried out afterwards and no questions asked. The authorities never investigate settlements of difficulties between gentlemen. I have been in brawls before and have killed my man and was never called to a reckoning."

Dr. Bargas visibly swelled like an angry turkey-cock.

"For shame, Rogelio," he protested. "I am not thinking of my reputation or of that of my shop. I mean I shall defend with my life the safety of my friend and guest, Don Guillermo Atorno."

"Merely a worse brawl, Jenofonte," hissed Somellera, "and two corpses instead of one. You cannot hope single-handed to thwart us all."

"Not all!" spoke Cabañas crisply. "Not single-handed."

"You, too, Atanacio!" Gamarra bellowed. "We'll make it three corpses!"

"Count higher, Señor Don Rogelio," cut in Rafael Mayorga, in a perfectly audible whisper.

"Higher yet!" added Desiderio, which words were echoed by Don Gil and Don Arturo, each in turn.

Carmelo, who had not spoken, drew his rapier.

Gamarra glared about him, his hand on his sabre-hilt. Every man in the room had his hand on his sword-hilt, many held their weapons half clear of their sheaths.

The voice of Dr Parlett, jeering, but barely half drunk, sounded from the doorway.

"Roger, my lad," he said, "you've a massacre on your hands. After you've made mincemeat of Casa Mayorga you'll have to make hogshead cheese of me. And I'm thinking there's more than one or two besides that will stand by Don Atanacio. You'd best let little Willy go home, if he wants to"

That sobered the assemblage instant. Carmelo sheathed his rapier last of all.

Hawthorne bowed to the gathering at large.

"Believe me, gentlemen," he said, "it grieves me to cut myself off from you. Before I go let me reiterate my pledges of lifelong secrecy. From now on I cease to be a member of this association Farewell."

"One moment," spoke Cabañas authoritatively. "I beg of you, Señor Don Guillermo, to remain long enough to witness my resignation. Gentlemen all, I am no longer president of your provisional republic, nor so much as your associate"

Bedoya towered to his full height.

"I move," he said evenly, "that this association be hereby dissolved forever."

"I second the motion," spoke Don Jacinto Ruiz.

"I object, Don Saturnino," Machain cut in. "Why should we dissolve when we have better hopes of success without Don Guillermo than with him?"

"Your venom blinds you, Estanislao," breathed Padre Melquiades.

"I demand a vote," Bedoya insisted.

There arose a babel of voices, of cries of:

"How will the contributions be redistributed?" of general discussion which Cabañas checked. Into the lull Hawthorne spoke again.

"I bid you farewell, gentlemen," he said.

"Let us accompany you, Don Guillermo," chorussed Don Gil, Don Arturo and the three Mayorgas.

"I thank you, gentlemen," Hawthorne replied, "but it seems to me that you should participate in this argument.



Moreover, I am unwilling for there to be any appearance of my being unable to care for myself anywhere in Asuncion, indoors or abroad."

After another bow he pushed past Parlett and went out.

(3)

From the door of the wine-shop Hawthorne turned to his right, intent on reaching his domicile and conferring with his host as quickly as possible. His directest route was along Calle Espinosa, round the corner of the block of mean houses on its north side, between its end and the swampy broadening of the upper Riachuelo, across the fourth Jesuits' bridge and thence by Calle Comercio. When he had picked his way along the narrow track between the slough and the blank housewall and just as he set foot on the small expanse of dry ground by the bridge, a triangle of bare earth barely forty feet along each side, he found himself confronted by the two brothers Carbonel, roused, apparently at sight of him, from lounging on the little bridge.

Roused they were and instantanly at the frothing point of Catalan fury. Jabbering at the top of their voices, they rushed at him, spouting torrents of epithets, objurgations and abuse.

Hawthorne afterwards told the Mayorgas that he was never so completely surprised in his life. He stood half stunned, dumbfounded most of all because the enraged brothers both appeared to assume that he was entirely aware of what they were talking about and why. At first he could make nothing of their cataracts of gibberish, but gradually he comprehended that the pair had been overwhelmed by calamities of which they considered him the cause. The absurdity of this notion bewildered him still more, and he listened, half dazed, to their cascades of vituperation. Slowly he came to comprehend that their expedition to the *yerbales* had turned out badly, their stay there had been prolonged through eight months instead of six, their pack of *yerba* had been below their expectations, both in quantity and quality; ill-luck had pursued them on their return journey and return voyage, their sales had netted them a bare profit, and finally that, what

with liquor and cards, they found themselves penniless. For all of which misfortunes they blamed Hawthorne.

He could have laughed aloud at this ridiculous folly, but his situation was far from laughable. The infuriated pair were entirely serious in their allegations, and demanded reparation as positively as if he had robbed them of cash or refused to repay a loan. Their volubility was but the prelude to a murderous onslaught, and he inwardly congratulated himself that at least they were Catalans and garrulous. Basques or Andalusians would have stabbed first and talked afterwards, or not at all. Stabbing, as things were, was not far off if his answer to their demands was not to their taste. An affray with two Catalans, fully half sober and strong as bullocks, practised at fighting with their long knives, and considering anything permissible by which they might disable an antagonist, was an affair of extreme danger. Hawthorne felt that his position was desperate. The three were alone; he could not hope to retreat by the contracted, slippery foot-path between the wall and the bog; to reach the narrow bridge he must pass his adversaries.

He was saved merely because the brothers differed as to what constituted their chief grievance against him. In general, both agreed that he was to blame for all their troubles, as if he had cast an evil spell over them. But Pablo emphasised his belief that Hawthorne's presence with them had caused him to choose a bad location for *yerba*-gathering, while Pedro dwelt on some myth of a vast reward offered for the apprehension of Felicien Abendano, and maintained that it should have been his, alleging that it had been pocketed entire by Hawthorne.

As he stood silent, their fury somehow kindled against each other over their difference of opinion. They raged at each other, drew their knives, clinched, slipped, and rolled down the low bank into the slough, where Hawthorne left them mired and clawing at each other, but both together shouting and yelling after him, as he went, dire threats of vengeance, if ever they got him in their power again.

(4)

Over their supper that evening Hawthorne told Francia of his encounter with the Carbonel brothers. Francia, his pigeon-bone held in air between his left thumb and forefinger, gazed at vacancy in silence.

"I don't want you knifed," he remarked, "especially at this interesting crisis, with iron-smelting merrily going forward and *yerba* looming large in the background. Yet I can't arrest these Carbonel maniacs just because they may be watching for a chance to murder you. Catalans are so uncertain; some are vindictive and pertinacious as your own Iroquois, others are light-headed and unsteadfast as weather-cocks. These brothers may have forgotten all about you already. So I hesitate to incarcerate them. But you should be as wary as if you were alone in the Gran Chaco and heard a jaguar in the underbrush."

"I hold the same views," Hawthorne agreed. "I could not expect you to imprison the Carbonels for my benefit on my mere word. But I want your permission to take a precaution you yourself suggested to me."

"When?" Francia queried.

"When we were talking about the Chilabers."

"The Chilabers!" Francia cried. "Who has told you about the Chilabers?"

"You told me yourself," Hawthorne replied.

"I?" the Dictator ejaculated. "Am I insane, or are you? I'll swear I have not mentioned the Chilabers to any living being, or alluded to them."

"It was across this very table," Hawthorne maintained, "one evening last June."

"Oh, last June!" Francia exclaimed, in a changed tone, enlightened. "That was when you persuaded me to let them go."

"Earlier than that," Hawthorne explained. "It was when I was trying to persuade you to let me take them out of prison, put them on a vessel at anchor, and get them a doctor."

"Yes," Francia admitted, "I remember. But what in particular did I say that applies to the Carbonels?"

"You said," Hawthorne replied, "that there might have

been Catalans on the *polacca*, that Don Diego might have given one some offence, and that he might therefore have carried a naked poniard inside his coat to be prepared to defend himself, as a Catalan intent on murder would be too quick for him if he tried to draw his hanger."

"I recall that also," the Dictator assented, "and I think I conjecture your meaning. You used the word 'permission.' You want my leave not only to carry a bare poniard inside your coat, but to carry it even when you visit me. Is that it?"

"Just that," Hawthorne affirmed.

Francia regarded him quizzically.

"It seems a suggestion equally natural and startling. Let us postpone settling it."

When they went into the library to play chess the Dictator curtly commanded:

"Light all the candles."

While Hawthorne was busy carrying out the order, he rummaged in his *bufete*, his back to all the rest of the room. When Hawthorne set again in its place the candle with which he had lighted the others, Francia went on rummaging, merely directing over his shoulder:

"Take your place at the chess-board, and set up the men, Don Guillermo."

As Hawthorne adjusted the last man, the Dictator turned and came towards him, carrying by its tip a beautiful dagger of the finest workmanship. It had a flat cross-guard, an ideal design to make no bulge inside a coat.

"Take it," Francia snapped, in his curtest manner. "Sleep with it under your pillow, and carry it wherever you go. It is yours."

Hawthorne, astounded, managed to express his thanks in a matter-of-fact manner, and slipped the weapon inside his coat.

They played game after game in silence.

When, late at night, Francia let Hawthorne out of the main entrance of the Palacio, he said:

"Be sure to sup with me again to-morrow night, Don Guillermo. I want more chess and we shall have much to talk over."

## CHAPTER XLIII

## AMNESTY

## (1)

NEXT day at dawn all Asuncion heard the squealing fifes and rolling drums pass from street to street heralding the reading of a decree. In the Plaza, in the Market Place, before the Cabildo, before every church in the city, at every street-corner, the *bando* was read aloud. Upon pain of death, with confiscation of every bit of property, all laymen of full Spanish blood, born outside of Paraguay, old and young alike, even to the lads, must assemble in the Cathedral Square before ten o'clock of that very day.

As the purport of the *bando* was made known in each Spanish household, the *patio* became filled with the sound of wailing and sobbing, for every wife declared that her husband was certain to be shot along with his fellow-Spaniards. The men, some with the philosophy of high birth and ancestral breeding, but most with but a poor counterfeit of it, attempted to soothe and comfort their distracted women-folk. All punctiliously arrayed themselves in their best attire, in court-suits or gala costumes, and repaired at once to the Plaza.

There they found a cordon of soldiers extending from the Cathedral tower to Calle Comercio, along the Plaza-side of the street, out into the Plaza to the dry gully, from there curving around to the brink of the bank above the bathing-shore and thence along to the other corner of the Cathedral front. Inside this band of military they were bidden to assemble.

There might be seen Don Gregorio de la Cerda, Don Bernardo Velasco, Don José Carisimo, Don Cristobal de Maria, Don Baltasar Figueredo, Don Antonio Recalde, Don Pascual Echagüe, Don Mauricio Zelaya, Don Gil Romero, Don Arturo Balaguer, Don Meliton Isasi, Don Vicente Mayorga, Dr. Jenofonte Bargas and many more, to the number of over two hundred.

In the broiling sun they were kept standing until nearly noon, the first comers for more than four hours.

The Doctors of Laws formed a group together, conjecturing their prospects of execution, imprisonment, banishment, fine or mere reprimand. The consensus was gloomy. Don Eustaquio Baiz was gloomiest of all. The others tried to cheer him up, Don Larios Galvan pointing out that they might just as well have been arrested in their homes and lodged at once in the public prison or even in the dungeons, Don Jacinto Ruiz taking the same view, and Don Fernando de la Mora concurring. But Don Hilarion Decoud was inclined to agree with Baiz. As they were discussing their situation, they were joined by that very bald man, Don Bermudo Larreta. He greeted them, and remarked:

"I do not see Porfirio anywhere."

"True," Don Larios ejaculated. "I have not seen him to-day. He should be here, of course. Can he have defied the decree? Or could he have missed hearing the *bando*?"

This started a fresh discussion. While they were deep in it a drum-beat sounded close to the church-porch. All turned that way.

Directly in front of the main door, under the middle arch of the porch, was set an old heavily-carved elbow-chair. In it sat Don Gumesindo Estagarribia, his feet in gaily embroidered slippers, his legs encased in black silk hose and black satin knee-breeches, his capacious paunch covered with a great expanse of yellow waistcoat, gold-laced and gold-embroidered, his costume completed by a portentous coat of mazarine blue silk, with a cambric handkerchief protruding from the breast-pocket.

On either side of him stood a mulatto girl, each with a silver salver, one bearing a silver *maté* cup and *bombilla*, the other a richly chased silver censer, containing charcoal perfumed with *pastilla*, beside which lay a dozen choice cigars.

As the roll of the drum drew the attention of the Spaniards to him, he was just setting down his *maté* cup and taking a puff of an already lighted cigar.

One of the soldiers beside the drummer called out in Guarani:

"Approach! *Carai* Estagarribia desires to address you!"

When they had ranged themselves closely before him, Estagarribia ostentatiously took snuff, sipped his *maté*,

puffed his cigar, and glared at the assembled Spaniards. Then he burst out in his coarse Creole Castilian :

"You are all traitors, that is to say, you are treacherous; in other words, you are treasonable; or, to put it plainly, you are disloyal; in short, you are not enthusiastic for the independence of Paraguay; in one word, you are lukewarm towards the welfare of our existing form of government.

"Can you hear me? Do I make myself heard? Am I audible to all of you? Do I make myself clear?

"You are Vandals, I say; Goths, barbarians, brutes, animals, beasts!

"Do you understand me? Can you comprehend? Can you follow me? Are you paying attention?

"You have no sense, no wisdom, no intelligence, no sagacity, no acumen, no perspicacity, no discernment, no discrimination, no judgment.

"You do not perceive the impracticability, the unfeasibility, the impossibility, the hopelessness, the absurdity, the inconceivability, the unimaginability, of any attempt, effort, venture, or endeavour, to impair, assail, weaken, injure, damage, mar, ruin or destroy the ascendancy, power, authority, domination, or sway of our Supreme Perpetual Dictator; the insuperability of his puissance.

"You are the natural enemies; in other words, the foes; that is to say, the adversaries; or, to make myself clear, the antagonists; in short, the opponents, of us all, of the patriots, the Creoles, the natives; in a word, of the natural born sons of the soil.

"You are a perverse generation, an obstinate race, a stubborn breed, a pig-headed tribe.

"You must follow your natural tendencies, your innate bent, against all reason, sense and sapience.

"There has been no end to your plots, to your intrigues, your machinations, your cabals, your designs, your conspiracies.

"You have been warned, admonished, cautioned, exhorted, reprehended, chidden, rebuked, reprimanded, castigated and lectured.

"Our Supreme Perpetual Dictator, in the days when he was first Consul, condescended to expostulate with you

upon your conduct and to read you a lesson as to your future behaviour.

"During his first dictatorship, knowing that he could not, at sight of you, restrain his righteous indignation, he mercifully commissioned me to remonstrate with you upon the renewal of your hideous practices.

"The *Carai* is long-suffering, kind-hearted, and merciful. He renews through me the warning, the giving of which, even once, was an undeserved indulgence.

"He bids me say that he is perfectly well aware of your plans, designs, schemes, intentions, purposes, and projects; that he sneers at the futility of your self-deception, at your stupid delusion that you were undetected.

"He makes this plain by the message to you that he is well aware that only one Spaniard in Asuncion has kept aloof from your latest and most dangerous conspiracy."

Here Don Gumesindo paused and scanned the faces of his victims. But no difference in their expression led him to conjecture which was the one to whom El Supremo had referred, since Don Vicente's face showed quite as much anxiety as those of his comrades.

Taking a long draught of *maté*, a big pinch of snuff, and more than one puff at a fresh cigar, Estagarribia recommenced:

"He bids me announce to you and through you to the clergy of Paraguay, even including the priors and the Bishop; to such misguided natives as you have seduced into joining your nefarious league; that if ever he learns of any one of you so much as hinting at a plot, or suggesting a conspiracy, let alone planning an insurrection, you shall not escape, not a man of you. You shall be rooted out from the soil of Paraguay, extirpated, abolished, annihilated, eradicated from the land.

"At the very least, you shall be confined in the public prison or banished; more likely cast into dungeons, most likely shot without mercy. This is no empty threat, no vain menace, but a mere forestatement of what will occur.

"Your fate is in your own hands. El Supremo does not expect you to become loyal citizens of our glorious republic, or helpful members of our prosperous commonwealth. He is willing that you should continue sullen and malevolent



as long as you keep silent; that you should exploit the needs of us Creoles and grow richer upon our necessities as long as you do not too unconscionably abuse the privileges accorded you.

"But this is the last warning. Move an eyelash or a lip towards any conspiracy, and you vanish into durance or perish utterly from the face of the earth.

"Meantime, our gracious Dictator proclaims through me complete, irreversible, absolute forgiveness, which you do not deserve, for all your past offences of thought, word and deed. He promulgates now and forever, for all of you, for all crimes of the past, plenary amnesty."

He blinked, waved a fat hand in dismissal and reached out for his *maté* cup.

As the released Spaniards, mopping their brows, trudged exhaustedly homewards, Don Arturo Balaguer spoke under his breath to Don Gil Romero:

"I wonder what would happen to old Estagarribia if His Omnipotence ever heard that the sergeant called him '*Carai*' when he ordered us to line up before him."

"Gumesindo would probably be shot as a potential traitor," Don Gil sneered.

(2)

Desiderio Mayorga, since he had been born in Buenos Aires, had had to accompany his father to the Plaza. Carmelo and Rafael, as natives of Paraguay, were outside the scope of the proclamation and free to do as they pleased. Carmelo had remained at home to soothe his mother, aunts and sisters. Hawthorne had joined him, as a trusted friend and almost a member of the family. His known influence with the Dictator was a comfort to the women. Especially to poor Angelica, two days a bride and equally in terror for her father and husband.

Rafael, however, had gone out and had remained away. He was still absent when his father and eldest brother returned. In fact, he did not return until after the general rejoicings had quieted, the two had rested and refreshed themselves and the family were about to sit down to dinner.

The sight of his face threw everybody into a state of renewed panic.

"What is wrong now?" Don Vicente asked sharply.  
"What fresh horror threatens us?"

"As to that, sir, I cannot say," Rafael replied; "but it is certain that Don Porfirio was arrested at dawn and confined in the general cell of the infantry barrack."

"Is he there now?" his father queried.

"No, sir," was the answer. "I just now saw him with another prisoner, whom I could not recognise at such a distance, taken on board Don Mauricio's brig which was about to sail for Buenos Aires."

"Was?" Don Vicente put in questioninglly.

"The moment the soldiers' boat rowed away," Rafael explained, "she weighed anchor and set sail."

"Well," said his father, "poor Porfirio is banished, that is clear. But I see no reason in this for your alarm."

"That is not all," Rafael continued. "Don Rogelio Gamarra was also arrested, and he was butchered early in the day along with two other prisoners taken out of the dungeons. I could not find any one who claimed to have any guess who they were. The firing squad missed all three of them and bayoneted them to death."

"*Jesu Maria!*" cried Angelica.

But Don Vicente remained calm.

"Have you heard of any more arrests?" he enquired.

"There certainly was one more arrest," Rafael answered, "but I could not learn who had been arrested. He is confined in the general cell of the cavalry barrack."

"At least," Mayorga said, "he has not been shot, whoever he is. Let us accept the good gifts of Heaven and eat our dinner like thankful Christians. After the siesta hour we can enquire further."

(3)

Not long after the siesta hour, Francia was announced at Casa Velarde. Ventura welcomed him with some surprise, and asked:

"Have you already returned from the barracks?"

"No," he replied. "I am just setting out for them and stopped in for a moment on my way."

"Why?" she queried.

"To give you an order for a prisoner's release from the cavalry barrack," he answered.

"An order of release!" she exclaimed. "I have not asked for any. For whom is it?"

"You will find that out when you read it," the Dictator smiled, holding it out to her, folded. "You have not asked for it, but I knew that you would ask for it as soon as you heard of the arrest. I knew I could not refuse you and must yield to your request, so I wrote and brought it before it was asked for, to save both of us time and trouble and the prisoner a night in the general cell of the cavalry barrack."

"If you are so considerate of him," Ventura smiled in return, "why arrest him at all?"

"It was entirely impossible to ignore his offences," Francia replied. "If such activities are condoned, Paraguay would soon cease to have a government and I to be a Dictator."

Ventura opened the order and paled.

"*Tio Lupercio!*" she cried. "Arrested? He went out as usual this morning, and it is not extraordinary for him to dine with friends without sending word home. We never thought——"

She broke off, twisting the order and staring at it.

Then she asked:

"What am I to do with him when I have him free?"

"Set him on a good horse," Francia said, "and tell him to make his best speed for Atir. Tell him that he is safe for life, however long he lives, while he keeps north of the Rio Salado, Lake Ipacaray, and Arroyo Piray. Tell him if he ever ventures south of that line I'll have him shot. And remember to tell him that in that case even your intercession would avail him nothing. This indulgence is more than he deserves."

"I shall not forget," Ventura replied.

She regarded the Dictator steadily, and asked:

"What was his offence?"

"Too much intimacy," Francia replied, "with Porfirio Somellera and Rogelio Gamarra."

"I can give you my word for him," she said, "that he will associate with neither any longer."

"I am sure he will not, without your word or his," quoth

Francia grimly. "Somellera is leagues down the river by now on a brig bound for Buenos Aires; Gamarra has been executed and buried."

"Oh!" said Ventura.

(4)

Naturally Hawthorne had been unable to sleep a wink during the siesta hour, and, being equally sleepy and wakeful, had neither appetite nor inclination for chess or conversation. He fairly dragged himself to the Government House, sick at heart, weary of soul, and utterly inert in mind and body.

Francia greeted him with a smile; not a sour smile nor a grim smile nor a sly smile, nor any other of the usual varieties of his rare smiles; this was a smile both complete and completely genuine.

"I'm pleased with you!" he said, "and pleased with myself. It is always agreeable to win at chess or at any larger game. I've been betting on you for eleven months and three days and I find I am a winner. I'm pleased with you for turning out what I believed you, and pleased with myself for reading you correctly and winning my wager."

Hawthorne's dazed senses did not grasp the meaning of the utterance, hardly heard the words, and clutched at the last.

"Your wager?" he repeated, perfunctorily. "What did you wager?"

"My life," said Francia simply.

"Your life!" cried Hawthorne, suddenly enlightened.

"You mean——"

He checked.

"Oh," said Francia, "I've bet my life on many a game these many years and always won. I always shall win every game I play with any of mankind, few or many. I'll never lose except at the game we all of us lose at, the game we play with Father Time. I've always won and always enjoyed the zest of winning and even more the zest of risking, and most of all the zest of the game itself.

"What is the game of chess to the game of life? Numberless though they may be, what are the combinations to be got out of thirty-two pieces of six different powers, on

sixty-four squares, compared to the infinitely more numerous complex combinations of the great game, where there is no limit to the number of squares or pieces, where every piece is different from every other, for what two human beings are alike, where the rules are conditioned only by the players' faculties?"

This homily gave Hawthorne an opportunity to recover his composure, which may have been Francia's intention.

"Come, Don Guillermo," he said, "both of us are not only overstrung, but unstrung. If we talk along this line we'll be unable to swallow a mouthful of our supper. Let us postpone everything relating to this matter until we have eaten."

At the table he resumed:

"I fancy you have no more hankering for food than I have. We need a stimulant. It is many a year since I drank French liqueur cognac before supper. But I judge that is precisely what we both need."

He poured two carefully calculated allowances and said:

"Drain your glass, Don Guillermo. I know to a nicety how much is good for us."

He raised his glass, fixed Hawthorne with his keen eyes and added:

"I drink to a man too magnanimous to abet assassination."

Hawthorne gasped, but recovered himself.

"And I," he said, "to the best executive Paraguay ever had or ever will have."

They clicked glasses.

No sooner were they seated at table than Francia deftly diverted the current of their thoughts.

"I have been thinking," he said, "that it would be really labour wasted to pave the haphazard, irregular, crooked streets of Asuncion. It seems to me a far better idea to devise a coherent and regular city-plan, lay off new streets, and pave them when cut through."

"How would you go about it?" Hawthorne queried warily.

"This building or mass of buildings," the Dictator expounded, "faces approximately north-east. So does the Cabildo, though their façades are not exactly on parallel lines. The Cathedral faces nearly north-west, and its long

side is aligned similarly to the façades of the other two. The three are the only really important structures in the city. Leaving the three undisturbed, a series of straight streets, approximately parallel to the river-bank, could be laid off, running precisely from north-west to south-east with a convenient uniform interval between them. Then others at right angles to these could be opened, with the same uniform interval. This would result in a regular city."

"It would," Hawthorne snorted, "but at the cost of the destruction of the existing town. Why, not one building in ten would suit any such arbitrary plan! Nine-tenths of the houses would be swept away; all the convents to a certainty, and all the churches."

"Well," said Francia, in his most argumentative tone, "what harm in that? Don Toribio's house, Don Vicente's and Gumesindo's are set like the Cabildo. Casal's and Recalde's are the only other houses worth saving, and Don Antonio has been talking of building a new house for a long time. The Casal house is a spacious ruin: no one has lived in it these nineteen years.

"As for the convents, they are extensive, but merely one-story sheds of adobe roofed with tiles. Their beams could be used just as they are. Building others would not cost much. And I am not so sure but that convents are a detriment anyhow.

"As for the small houses, they are mere huts and could be replaced in a few days."

"But the trees!" Hawthorne objected. "I never beheld finer shade-trees than those which embower Asuncion. In laying out new streets, you would eradicate practically all the trees."

"Oh," said Francia, "it would be easy to plant accurate rows of selected varieties, and in this climate trees grow so rapidly that we should soon have imposing avenues."

"I have never heard of a town which ruined its trees and afterwards replaced them," Hawthorne challenged.

"Nor I," said Francia slyly, "of a city replanned by an absolute, untrammelled ruler, as I now am. I can make sure of renewed shade."

"But what would you do about the Riachuelo?" Hawthorne asked.

"Fill it in and grade it over," Francia replied.

"You'd ruin the charm of Asuncion," Hawthorne vigorously maintained. "Its fascination is due to its delightful irregularity. You would sacrifice that for a dull and wearisome monotony."

"What?" cried Francia. "Do you prefer a fortuitous jumble of winding lanes to an ordered plan of surveyed avenues?"

This fired all Hawthorne's love for Boston, aversion to Philadelphia and loathing for Cartagena, Pamplona, and Buenos Aires. He launched into a diatribe on the folly of the gridiron plan for cities and a laudation of curved streets.

Francia regarded him with genuine amazement.

"This is the only really ill-judged opinion to which I have ever heard you give voice," he said. "You are positively acrimonious on the subject. Let us recur to what we were speaking of before supper. You seemed startled."

"Startled!" Hawthorne exclaimed. "No language I know has any word to describe my feelings. You said 'eleven months and three days.' Do you mean——"

He checked again.

"I meant," said the Dictator evenly, "that I have had accurate reports of most of your doings and sayings since the day after you reached Asuncion."

Hawthorne gaped.

"Then why on earth," he exclaimed, "did you not have me shot at once at the beginning?"

"Because," Francia rejoined, taking a big pinch of snuff, "I was playing the game, a game worth while, worth a million chess-games.

"All I heard of you, from the first, roused my interest and staggered my credulity. There was something awe-inspiring in your placid and evidently sincere assumption that if you decided to overthrow my government it must fall. There was something very taking in your open-mindedness. You had not assumed that I was a tyrant, though you thought it probable. You had not assumed that a saving leaven of sons of liberty existed in Paraguay fit to form a genuine republic, though you hoped as much. You had not assumed the truth of anything you had heard, you came to investigate and perpend. I perceived that you

were really open to conviction, not a prejudiced partisan, to whom all my doings must appear fiendish and I a demon. I judged you worth convincing. I have played the game to let you convince yourself that no men exist in Paraguay capable of creating and maintaining a veritable republic, that I am the best executive for my country. The game was often terrifyingly hazardous, but correspondingly delightful. I have keenly enjoyed it. I keenly enjoy having won it. I conceive that you and I respect each other and are genuine friends."

Hawthorne bowed.

"From you, Sir," he said, "I appreciate the honour and the compliment. On my side, I can affirm that we are genuine friends."

"And we're getting better and better friends all along at each interview?" Francia queried.

"Assuredly," Hawthorne admitted.

"Then why on earth, to use your own phrase," the Dictator asked, "did you hold to your plans in opposition to me? Was it mere cramp of the determination, so to speak; was it mere blindness to the contemptible character of your associates, or was it a perception of some defect or failing in my personality which I myself cannot detect? Speak out, man! Tell me; I want to know."

Hawthorne ruminated while his host lit a fresh cigar.

"I think," he said slowly, "it was a mixture of all three."

"Then," Francia queried keenly, "what are my chief defects as a Dictator? Speak out. I tell you I really want to hear."

Hawthorne pulled a wry face and smiled a wry smile.

"I thought," he said, "that I perceived in you too much for your own and the country's good of both inconsistency and caprice."

Francia pulled a wryer face than Hawthorne had shown.

"I admit the caprice," he said; "but where do you find inconsistency?"

Hawthorne lit a fresh cigar and puffed at it.

"I can think of only one instance at the moment," he said. "It seems to me hardly consistent economy, after invariably counting the cartridges before executions, to



waste ammunition in a general, haphazard fusillade at stray dogs."

"I can meet you there," the Dictator asserted. "A prisoner cannot escape and is motionless on the *banquillo*. Three cartridges are quite enough to finish him. But dogs are mobile, and it may take a dozen cartridges or a score to kill one dog."

"Why waste powder on vagabond curs at all?" Hawthorne queried.

"Ever see a man die of hydrophobia?" Francia retorted.

"Never," Hawthorne confessed.

"I have!" spoke Francia shortly. "Twice. And once I have seen a young woman die that worst of deaths. I am resolute, as far as my power goes, that here in Asuncion no innocent human being shall suffer hell's pains before death; not if I can prevent it. I am short of powder, but I am willing even to lavish it on the extermination of stray dogs. They are too dangerous to unsuspecting wayfarers.

"You may convict me of inconsistency, but not on that score. I am a careful economist, but economy of human life must come before economy of powder. I am economical of human life even in suppressing conspiracies. What do you think of me now, of me, that bloody-minded oppressor? A conspiracy with a roster including every old Spaniard in Paraguay except Vicente, and all the ex-generals and ex-colonels; a conspiracy really dangerous, as long as you guided its councils; a conspiracy capable of being still dangerous without you, dissipated, abolished, annihilated at the cost of merely one man relegated to his estates, one banished, and one bayoneted. That beats even Cicero's record in suppressing the Catilinarian conspiracy: he had nine men put to death. What do you think of me in comparison?"

"Three men," Hawthorne reflected. "I heard that three were shot and two banished. With Don Lupercio's relegation to Atir that makes six."

"But only three on account of your defunct conspiracy," the Dictator explained. "I took advantage of the opportunity to rid myself of Medardo. As Banfi was certain to shun Corrientes and Santa F and make no landing till he reached Buenos Aires, as he is the most competent river-captain to avoid falling into the hands of the Artigueos,

as Somellera was capable of looking out for his own security, Medardo, with them, had a reasonable chance of reaching Buenos Aires safely. This relieved me from my quandary in respect to him, for I had been in the cruelest position in regard to him: I could not leave at liberty a man who had attempted my life, could not be sure he would not escape from the public prison, dreaded that he might die in his dungeon, which would have haunted me to the end of my days; could not shoot, as he deserved, a man who had been my saviour in former years, and could not send him down the river to probable death at the hands of Ramirez or some other ruffian. Medardo was a heavy care to me. Now, thank God, he is off my mind."

Hawthorne stared.

"That accounts for the two banished," he said, "but what of the three shot?"

"The other two," Francia explained crisply, "were the Chilabers."

"The Chilabers!" cried Hawthorne.

"Just they," the Dictator answered. "Those idiots, those asses, re-entered Paraguay; one by Paso del Rey, the other opposite Candelaria. Don Joaquin's patrols nabbed them both and sent them here unobtrusively. I had them shot, of course."

"Of course!" Hawthorne agreed. "What a pair of incredible fools!"

"Incredible, indeed!" said Francia. "Can you formulate any colourable explanation of their behaviour?"

"None," said Hawthorne. "But likewise I can give myself no explanation of why only Somellera was exiled and only Gamarra shot. And, if Gamarra was shot, why was Don Lupercio merely confined to his estates? Was it because he is Ventura's uncle?"

"Partly," Francia confessed, "but only partly. Proverbially, the Velardes are easily fooled; he most of all. He was chosen as catspaw and spokesman as most likely to win you over. He was far from suspecting it himself, but he was merely Porfirio's mouthpiece. The plot was Somellera's, the idea of using you wholly his."

Hawthorne gaped again.

"Then," he cried, "why was not he shot?"

"Because," Francia explained kindly, like a nurse with

a fretful child, "he has or had some sparks of decency in his composition. Once, years ago, Porfirio had a chance to put me out of the way finally; was tempted, no doubt of that; but resisted and refrained. I never forget such treatment.

"As for Gamarra, my stomach turns over to think of him. He was my chief informer and tool. Yet he not only betrayed you and the rest to me, but sought to betray me to you and thought himself fooling me all the while. With Somellera he plotted a separate and distinct cabal in your conspiracy which was to make use of you to kill me and then put aside the plans of your republic and establish Somellera as Dictator, for he planned to get rid of Gamarra when he had used him long enough."

He snorted.

"Let us forget all this and have some chess," he suggested.

"With your permission," Hawthorne rejoined, "one more question."

"A hundred, if you like," Francia assented.

"Why does Dr. Bargas go scot-free?"

"Jenofonte!" the Dictator cried. "The pompous zany! He deserves no punishment nor even a thought. But were he never so culpable, I'd let him alone. If I interfered with him I'd have to detect one or ten or a hundred nests of conspiracy; while he sells Mendoza wine they'll all plot at his warehouse. I am better off as things are."

In the study he rummaged his *bufete* and asked:

"Are you good at repairing small mechanical devices?"

"I have sometimes succeeded," Hawthorne replied.

"I have here," the Dictator explained, "three of those little French gags called '*des poires d'angoise*.' You see, they are the shape of a pear when closed. All that is necessary to gag a prisoner effectively is to pop one in his mouth and press the spring, like that. The pear opens, and the anguish, they tell me, is very acute after an hour or so. But, however much they excruciate the victim, they cause no injury. He is gagged effectively, cannot groan even, but is in no danger of strangling. Also, his external appearance is unaltered, the gag inside his jaws produces no bulge outside nor any distortion of the features. So they are extremely useful.

"Two are in good order, but the third will not work."

Hawthorne examined the three "pears of anguish" and soon discovered a broken spring in the defective one.

"I can do nothing," he said. "It would take almost a watch-maker to forge so small and so strong a spring."

"Well," said Francia, "it was worth while asking you. And now let us have our chess."

## CHAPTER XLIV

### COMPUNCTIONS

#### (1)

AT the first peep of day, after an almost wholly sleepless night, Hawthorne had Tolomeo saddle his horse with his full traveller's *recado*. But when Tolomeo appeared with his cream-coloured mule also saddled for a journey Hawthorne told him he was to remain and keep Hero from following: he meant to travel alone.

He felt the need of solitude, of loneliness. His being overflowed with the disgust that filled him when he thought of his fellow-conspirators. He felt the same crushing depression as he reflected upon the utter futility of almost every effort he had put forth in Paraguay. Everything he had done appeared as wasted as his intervention for the worthless Chilabers.

He rode hard, with no definite objective in mind, only the vague idea of avoiding every hamlet, *estancia* and homestead where he was known. In this he succeeded, and, when night overtook him somewhere east of Paraguay, not far from Mt. Leon, he camped near a spring on a dryish hillside in a grove of wild orange trees. From there he pushed on eastward at the first dawn-light and, passing Valenzuela, succeeded in losing himself totally long before sunset. He had eaten the last of the provisions which Tolomeo had packed in his wallet, except most of the generous supply of *charqué*. Hawthorne never ate jerked beef except as a last resort, and was disinclined to make a supper of *charqué* and nothing else. He judged he would be unknown at any habitation he encountered, as he was quite

sure the country was entirely novel to him. His longing for solitude was wearing off, and he felt that the sight of a *chacara* would be welcome.

After spending two days in shunning human beings and steering clear of farmsteads, he now for the first time found himself, apparently, in a district wholly uninhabited. He saw nothing but waving foliage, grass, or reeds.

Finally, just after sunset, almost at the last moment before the rapid fading of the brief twilight would have left him hopelessly lost for the night, Hawthorne did descry the thatched roof of a cottage.

As he approached he saw it was one of the better class, judging by the orchards and gardens about it. He inferred from the windows, all shutterless, screenless and gaping as everywhere in that countryside, that it had three rooms. The thatched verandah-corridor along its white-washed front was fairly spacious: the sleeping platform near it was high, ample, and solidly built.

Drawing nearer, he was saluted and surrounded by a formidable pack of lean, ferocious-looking dogs, yelping about his horse's legs.

At the sound of their barking, children, many children, swarmed out from under the portico, swarmed in again, swarmed in and out. Hawthorne detected, he thought, a something more than surprise, excitement and interest in their behaviour; it had in it also a hint of consternation, almost of alarm. He seemed to glimpse an adult face at one of the windows, but of that he could not be sure.

Presently a woman appeared among the children and disappeared again. When she returned a man followed her; and, while the children clustered about the woman, he advanced, hat in hand.

Upon his coming any tinge of trepidation vanished from the family's demeanour and never reappeared. Hawthorne imputed the transient impression of it he had had to the Arcadian simplicity of these isolated but urbane crofters.

The cottager was an elderly man, his dark hair and long beard streaked with grey. Altogether Spanish he was in appearance and bearing, and also, to the wanderer's great relief, in speech, though with some effort.

After the first brief greetings, always formal in Paraguay between strangers, even the lowliest, Hawthorne asked for a little water. The master of the house, leaving his guest standing by his panting horse, himself fetched water in an earthen jug, and stood, in a most deferential attitude, while he drank. Hawthorne urged him to be covered, but the Creole smiled away the suggestion.

Pouring gravely upon the ground the water remaining in the jug when handed back to him, he introduced himself as Leonardo Vera and gracefully acknowledged Hawthorne's self-introduction by saying, in rather halting and laboured Spanish:

"Señor Don Guillermo, it is late. You are alone. We are about to sup. Will you not do us the honour to enter my poor house which is henceforth yours, to share our meal and, if you have no pressing business, to remain for the night with us?"

Upon Hawthorne's acceptance he bowed again, turned, and called in Guarani, telling his son to take the gentleman's horse. The son, a personable young man of about twenty, came forward, hat in hand, with as much grace and politeness as his father had exhibited.

Before the verandah Hawthorne was presented to the wife, a comely matron, younger than her husband, and to eight or more children; the eldest a tall young woman of about twenty-two, almost as much a *rubia* as Doña Encarnacion Figueredo; the youngest a tough little Gaucho of eight, who immediately, and apparently unprompted, brought a basin and plenty of water for the customary ablutions of a weary horseman. The boys meantime stood hat in hand, the mother and girls with arms crossed over their bosoms, in a pretty attitude of deference.

Not from any intention of duplicity, but merely because he distrusted, as usual, his Guarani, which tongue he now understood fairly well but boggled over with strangers, Hawthorne confined himself to bows, nods and smiles, which seemed to answer every purpose with these gentle Arcadians. Soon, quite as if he had been in North America or Europe, he was seated under the portico, amusing the children by displaying his watch, an undreamed-of wonder.

While the light was still sufficient to see to eat, supper

was announced: a spitted lamb roasted whole, *chipá* bread, manioc, a superabundance of milk, and plenty of comb honey; of course with unlimited *maté*.

Twelve of them sat down to table—Hawthorne, his hosts, seven children and three peon labourers, who uttered not one syllable during the meal, comported themselves with notable propriety, and ate with singular daintiness.

During the supper the younger children assisted the one maid-servant in waiting on their elders. Hawthorne noticed this, judging that there was no need for service, as everything provided was on the table. Yet they flitted noiselessly in and out, carrying away, it appeared to Hawthorne, much more food than they brought in. The portions of each viand which they took out seemed very generous for one slender girl.

As they ate, the family chattered in Guarani, while the host conversed sedulously with Hawthorne in his halting Spanish. Several times he apologised and took part for a moment in the general talk.

During one of these brief periods, Hawthorne heard the youngest daughter break in with an exclamation:

"I forgot to take him any honey!"

To which her mother replied curtly:

"Never mind now, and be silent."

Later he heard the wife ask the nationality of their guest, as he was plainly of none known to her. The husband tactfully answered that he was not sure, but conjectured that he was a countryman of the invaders who had thrown cannon-balls into Montevideo; thus dexterously conveying that he thought him an Englishman, without using the word *Ingles*. For the good man assumed, of course, that Hawthorne understood no Guarani and did not suspect that they were speaking of him; whereas since Guarani possessed no native term for "Englishman," but used the Spanish synonym, the word *Ingles* would have betrayed the subject of their talk.

Hawthorne was much struck by such innate courtesy and the instinctive subtlety amid such primitive conditions of diet, clothing, and housing. In fact, in all he said and in his manner of saying it, Leonardo Vera might have been a grandee instead of a semi-peasant yeoman.

The meal ended with cigars, every human being, down to the eight-year-old, lighting and puffing one.

As the cigars burned short, the host remarked :

"It is time to sleep," and repeated the same in Spanish to Hawthorne. The whole family trooped out of the house to the ladder of the sleeping-platform.

At the foot of the ladder the father stood and the boys in turn approached him and, pressing their hands together, fingers pointing skyward in the attitude of prayer, each said :

"Your blessing, my father."

Over each the patriarchal cottager waved his right hand to describe the figure of a cross, repeating :

"God bless you, my son."

Following the boys, the girls mounted the ladder, each after asking her father's blessing in a similar attitude and waiting for him to say :

"God bless you, my daughter," which form of words he did not vary for the maid-servant, who mounted among them.

Then the wife, similarly blessed, went up.

Thereupon Vera motioned Hawthorne to mount, himself then following. The three peons came last, pulling up the ladder after them.

The barefoot women and girls merely removed their belts, loosened the necks of their *tupois*, and lay down. Half of them were already asleep when Hawthorne reached the level of the stage. On its straw mats he lay down among the boys, most of them already snoring.

The peons lay by the ladder.

The dogs grouped about the posts of the platform uttered not a bark, not a growl; the roosting fowls made only an occasional squawking, as one was disturbed in its sleep; the tethered and hobbled saddle-horses champed with little noise; the cattle were quiet in their corral, the sheep in their fold. In the all-embracing stillness Hawthorne could hear the bats twittering above him. The general chorus of tree-frogs and woodland insects soothed him to sleep.

But he was kept awake and later awakened again and again by muffled sounds, seeming to come from the cottage, as of a human being fighting mosquitoes, tossing and turning restlessly, and moaning in a troubled, intermittent



sleep. He could not make out whether his impression was based on reality or was a delusion of a half-dream between sleeping and waking. When he listened intently he heard only the universal night-noises, as he drowsed he seemed to hear among them and above them these distressful indications of a suffering fellow-creature.

The cock-crows that greeted the brightening dawn waked all the tenants of the platform. There was some rubbing of eyes but little hesitation about getting up. The ladder was lowered; the peons, servant, family and guest descended. No morning toilet was made by any one or seemed thought of. The girls went to milk the cows, the boys to saddle the horses, the peons to the corral, the servant to make the fire.

Breakfast was merely *maté*, new milk, and cigars. The brief meal over, Hawthorne expressed his thanks, knowing Paraguay too well to hint at payment, bade his hosts adieu, and was soon in the saddle.

Already satiated with self-communion, he made for Asuncion, spent the night at Yaguaron with Don Pedro Francia, and reined up at Casa Mayorga late in the afternoon of the fourth day.

Hardly had Hero barked his first bark when Carmelo was at Hawthorne's stirrup.

"You are wanted at the Government House," he said. "We have had almost a procession of messengers enquiring for you. To-day not an hour has passed without a fresh arrival. Each has repeated the message that you are to report at the Palacio as promptly as you can without inconveniencing yourself."

"I shall not inconvenience myself," Hawthorne replied, repressing Hero's leaps of ecstasy. "I'll bathe and change into fresh clothes before I start."

(2)

Francia's greeting was oddly compounded of vexation and relief.

"Where on earth have you been?" he queried.

Hawthorne told.

"Why?" came the second question.

Hawthorne tried to tell.

"I'll never fathom the New England temperament," the Dictator mourned. "Why disappear without a hint or inkling to me? Why unnerve me with solicitude?"

Hawthorne looked his amazement.

"Have sense!" Francia admonished him. "Of course I was anxious. Do you suppose I gave you that poniard for the Carbonels only? Not I, nor did you ask for it for the Carbonels only. You need it for every one of your late associates except Bernardo and Gregorio and the handful who stood by you at the crisis.

"Irrespective of consideration for you I should have had Gamarra executed anyhow, but remember if he were alive now you would be a dead man, for if he had not been executed you could have survived only by killing him. The rest are only a shade less envenomed than he was; especially Valeriano and Segundo. You need to be on the watch day and night.

"Under such circumstances why turn me grey before my time with alarm? I haven't enjoyed a meal since I saw you last, which reminds me I can hurry supper and we'll both be surprised how much we relish it. Where did you sup last night? With Pedro? You should have supped better than I; that bullock always has his manger stuffed."

Over the supper Francia gradually extracted from Hawthorne a fully detailed narrative of his ramble. He appeared much interested in his account of Vera's cottage and of how it impressed him.

"This is very striking," he said. "You tell it as if it were the first Paraguayan cottage you had seen. It is as fresh as a painting. I am seeing a Paraguayan farmstead through foreign eyes."

And he asked many questions, particularly of Hawthorne's recollections of the children waiting on the supper table, and of his drowsy sensations before he fell asleep on the platform.

Over the chess-board he said:

"This will be our last evening together for some time. I must devote myself to Beltran. The poor lad is brooding over his loss of Angelica, and is pitiaibly dispirited. You and I are the only human beings in Asuncion capable of cheering him up. As we three, for some reason which I could not have foreseen and cannot analyse, do not get on

well together I cannot have you both as guests at once. And I must have him with me nearly every evening. I am uneasy because he is left to his lonely regrets to-night. I could not love that boy more if he were my son. Suffering to him makes me suffer more than he himself. I would do anything to make him happy. At least, I must do all I can to diminish his unhappiness. I would even give him leave, though he is the life of every regiment I have, if I thought leave would really benefit him. If he had leave, you could go out to Itapuá and play chess with him. You can't play chess with him in town, for of course I couldn't allow even you inside a barrack after dark and you are domiciled in the same house with Angelica and her bridegroom. So the best I can do is to play chess with him myself. That seems to give him a respite from brooding. But that cuts me off from you.

"Meanwhile, promise me you won't vanish again. No, I do not want to put you under practical arrest, or confine you to the city. Ride all you please provided your dog runs by your horse and you sleep at Casa Mayorga. But be sure your belt pistols and your holster-pistols are clean, properly loaded, and ready primed. Don't go afoot anywhere outside the city; that will be quite sufficient. Otherwise I lay no injunctions upon you; suit yourself and do as you like."

Hawthorne won the first game, and the Dictator exclaimed:

"What marvellous luck you have!"

He himself won the second, and similarly exclaimed:

"What miraculous luck for me!"

"You perplex me," Hawthorne rejoined. "I cannot see that luck was a factor in either game, for either of us. They seemed normal routine games without a serious mistake or brilliant coup on either side."

"I was not speaking of the chess-board at all," Francia explained. "I was thinking of that poniard clattering on the window-sill and the foiled assassin fleeing in the moonlight, of your fist thudding upon Agustin Lopez's jaw, of Don José's face when he saw your horse dead in the pit and me safe, of your peppering Abendano's calves, of your encounter under the verandah at Ibirai, and of one more instance of the same sort."

"What one more?" Hawthorne queried. "You puzzle me."

"Evidently; and I knew I should," the Dictator chuckled. "But when you learn what I am talking about you will agree with me that your luck is amazing, and mine (through you always and more and more each time) altogether unbelievable."

(3)

The sudden abolition of the sustaining purposes of his life made the days ensuing extremely unpleasant for Hawthorne.

His morning ride, with or without Carmelo, was always at least partly a pleasure, but never completely. Riding with no definite object irked Hawthorne. When he first came to Asuncion he wished to familiarise himself with the suburbs and neighbourhood. Each ride had had a specific purpose. But once he was acquainted with the face of the country, the estates, the roads, the houses, repeating an excursion for the mere sake of the fresh air and of the exhilaration of a brisk gallop did not entirely please him.

After his ride came his visit to the prison. In this again was a mixture of pleasure and irritation. Every minute he spent in Cecilia's company was precious to him; he was, if possible, more in love than when he first saw her. But, while she was always courteous and usually friendly, his baffled sense of never getting any better acquainted with her depressed his already low spirits and added to the despondency he felt at his inability to secure her freedom.

The Mayorga family he found always delightful and never boring. But he fretted at being reduced to their society only. To be sure, Dr. Bargas had called and had urged him to continue to frequent his wine-shop, declaring that most of his former cronies bore him no ill-will and indeed regarded him as entirely free from blame in regard to the dissolution of the conspiracy. But Hawthorne could not overcome his repugnance to the memories the wine-shop was certain to evoke and to the men he was likely to meet there.

His afternoons hung deadlly heavy on his hands.

At first he tried to take up time by going to bed early, rising late, and similarly increasing the time he took for his daytime siesta. But after a few days he seemed to have had enough sleep and indeed could not stay asleep as much of the twenty-four hours as he had been used to.

The evening *tertulias* he found no longer spontaneously gay. The shadow of the dissolved conspiracy hung over all who came, the evenings were dull and bored him. He longed for a chess-game with Francia.

His escape from this tedium came, oddly enough, through a second encounter with the Carbonels.

He had met Pablo, more than half drunk. Pablo had recognised him, that was plain, but without any show of hostility or of resentment. Quite the reverse, he had apologised for Pedro's "rudeness," as he called it, altogether as if he had had no part in it, had urbanely, if drunkenly, disclaimed any belief that Hawthorne had brought their expedition bad luck or that any reward had ever been paid or promised to any one for the capture of Felicien Abendano. He had ingeniously led up to the suggestion that he would be obliged for a small loan.

Hawthorne had just given him two silver *pesos* when Pedro came round the corner, like a charging bull, belowed at Pablo, gesticulated, cursed, accused him of betraying his brother to a foreigner, of taking bribes to ruin him, of swearing away their chance to collect from Hawthorne an indemnity for the bad luck he had brought them and their share of the reward paid for Felicien Abendano; and, when Pablo acknowledged the accusation and maudlinly displayed the two *piastres*, fell upon him with blows and vows to kill him.

Hawthorne again left them, knives in hand, rolling on the ground clinched in what seemed a death struggle.

The next day he again encountered Pablo, less intoxicated, and he explained that Pedro was violent but harmless, all bark and no bite. His rambling discourse about idling on the river-front or on a wharf or pier and his tales of long talks between waifs like himself gave Hawthorne a hint at which his imagination set to work.

He took only Carmelo into his confidence. Carmelo was at first shocked at the bravado of the idea, then he agreed

that the mere effrontery of so hazardous a prank made it almost safe.

He procured Hawthorne a round hat of the Spanish cut, a poncho and a coarse pair of peon's trousers. Habited in these, Hawthorne stole out after dark and rambled about the city, barefoot and tremulous.

But he was soon reassured and before long quite at his ease. No one halted him, the peons he encountered accepted him for one of themselves, and, when he passed Parlett, almost rubbing shoulders with him, he was not recognised. The streets of Asuncion in those days were totally innocent of any attempt at artificial illumination. The few persons abroad after dark found their way about by moonlight, starlight, or mere groping. Hawthorne met ex-Colonel Sinforiano Guerreros face to face on a clear night and was ignored. All this gave him confidence.

He was puzzled at the peons and idlers accepting his Guarani without remark. But he reflected that although the traffic up and down the river was trifling, brigs and other vessels from Buenos Aires arrived at Asuncion at intervals and left there all sorts of waifs and strays from various ports far overseas. Broken Guarani was no novelty among the idlers in the Plaza.

He found excitement in the risk and entertainment in some trifling occurrences. He repeated the venture several nights in succession, until hanging about the water-front became quite natural to him.

On the fifth night Hawthorne encountered a man, like himself, only round hat, poncho and legs to any one's vision. Hawthorne's cigar was drawing well and the other civilly if somewhat incoherently asked for a light.

Risking being stabbed for the sake of his chancing to have a purse, and every muscle ready, Hawthorne politely acceded. The face brought close to his was that of Luis Bazan. The moment his cigar was alight he began pouring out an account of his grievances against the world, speaking as if to an old acquaintance.

Hawthorne was much chagrined at being recognised, but, as Luis gabbled on, it was plain that he had not recognised him, and evidently had no suspicions what manner of man he was.

At first Hawthorne was pleased at this, taking it as an

evidence of the adequacy of his disguise. But the torrential garrulity of Luis quickly advised him that he was too nearly drunk to notice any small variations of manner or garb; so near drunk that he ignored any deficiencies of Hawthorne's Guarani, did not wait for answers to his questions, and required no encouragement to continue his loquacity.

Thus proceeding, Hawthorne a mere listener, they reached Don Meliton Isasi's wharf with its usual gathering of idlers. Their shapes could barely be discerned in the gloom, for the night was starless, overcast and dead calm, most unusual weather for Asuncion. Three were grouped half-way out the pier, and these they passed by. At the very end were two leaning against the spiles to the right, and one sitting near the middle of the pier-head with his feet hanging over. Luis plumped himself down by this burly shape and the growl that came from it identified Pablo Carbonel. Hawthorne sat and kicked his swinging feet next Luis.

He had been there some time before he made out another human figure to his left, wedged in among the spiles, half sitting, half lying, seemingly a spare old man. He uttered no sound, and the others ignored him with the air of not only being used to his presence but entirely used to him.

Luis recommenced his grumbling monologue:

"First time I went to the *yerbales* I was a greeny, of course. I couldn't pick over two hundred pounds of *yerba* a day to save my life. All the old *yerbateros* jeered at me. I worked six months and couldn't do over two hundred pounds a day. That's eight *arrobas*. Most of the other peons gathered twelve *arrobas*. The best of them brought in sixteen *arrobas*. My mate was just such a greeny as I, and we couldn't weigh up anything worth mentioning over sixteen *arrobas* each turn. We were always teasing each other about being slow. I was so fretted about being in the slowest pair in camp, I never stopped to think what I was earning. When we were paid off and the *capataz* said I owed a hundred and twenty *piastres* for outfit and stores and paid me twenty-four *piastres* in silver, I thought I was the richest peon in Paraguay.

"By the cross of Saint Thomas, it was all gone in six weeks and I dead drunk outside a *pulperia*. And when I

woke I had not a *maravedi*, nor anything in the world but the shirt and drawers I was wearing. So, two months after pay-day, I was back again in a *yerbal* hard at work.

"It's been the same ever since. I earn twice as much and keep none. I was paid off this day five weeks. I am as good a gatherer now as any in Paraguay. Juan and I weighed in thirty to thirty-four *arrobas* every turn, last spell. I was in debt no more than any other spell; about a hundred and twenty-five *piastres*. I was paid a hundred and sixty-five *piastres* in hard silver. I spent eight *pesos* on candles to burn in the church of San Blas, for a vow. I bought sixty *pesos*' worth of silver for my saddle and bridle and about twenty *pesos*' worth of clothes.

"By the Cross of Saint Thomas, in a month I had lost every *medio* I possessed at cards.

"I sold my lovely new saddle and bridle.

"The cash went at gaming like the rest.

"I sold my new clothes.

"I've lost my last *maravedi*.

"To-morrow off again for the *yerbales*.

"Thus it goes.

"They say Paraguay is now a republic and all of us free men. It's a cheat, a fraud, a sham; we're not free, we *yerbateros*. I'm not free. I'm a slave, as much a slave as those poor blacks El Zapo bellows at and bangs about. I'm a slave. All we *yerbateros* are slaves. Slaves of the *habilitados*. I am naked. To-morrow I shall be hungry. I must have food and clothes. I am no good except to gather *yerba*. I go to an *habilitado*, to Pablo perhaps, here next me. He takes me to Orrego and agrees to pay for my food until we sail for up-river. That lands me in debt for what I eat. I am naked. I must have an outfit. The *habilitado* procures me what I need. That sinks me deeper in debt. At the *yerbal* I must have tobacco, brandy, sweetmeats perhaps, what not. I am each day still deeper in debt. I am a slave, a slave to the *habilitado*. And they call this a free republic!"

"You are all wrong," spoke one of the two off in the darkness to the right, and Hawthorne recognised the voice of Lazaro Nuñez. "You are free to live. You have been living. You've had your fun. You were free to spend your *pesos* on what sort of fun you chose. You did choose



the fun you liked best and spent your *piastres* on that. You forget the fun and remember the work, the work was what you had to do to be free to have your fun. I work as hard as you and have no more fun. But I look at life the right way. I remember the fun and forget the work. You look at life the wrong way."

"He's not so wrong," growled Pablo Carbonel. "He's more than half right. We may be free for our fun, but we're slaves at our work. The peons are no more slaves of us *habilitados* than we are of the *comerciantes*. We're all slaves. We *habilitados* are slaves of the *comerciantes*. Luis ran in debt a hundred *piastres* or so and cleared two hundred or so and gambled them. I ran in debt five thousand *pesos* when I got my *habilitacion*, my grub-stake from Don Meliton. I paid him back and had ten thousand clear of my own. Instead of leaving half with Padre Loisaga and grub-staking myself with the other half, I've gambled or spent every *rial* to the last *medio*. To-morrow I must go to Don Meliton again, and begin it all over again. We're all slaves together, the *yerbateros* of the *habilitados* and the *habilitados* of the *comerciantes*."

"You're all slaves of your own follies and vices," came from their left.

The voice struck on Hawthorne's ears as familiar and unfamiliar. It had in it the world-wide whine of the professional mendicant, and yet had also a sort of mumble with it as if the speaker had pebbles in his mouth.

"Quit preaching, Don Gaspar!" came from Pablo Carbonel, with more than even his usual brutality. "You are an old fool; you are the most completely foolish old fool alive."

No answer came from among the spiles. Hawthorne stared through the darkness, eager to catch a glimpse of this most extraordinary of all the *pordioseros* of Asuncion. But he could make out nothing more than a huddle of rags about a human shape, as it were a skeleton muffled in wrappings.

As he was peering into the shadows, he heard stealthy feet behind him, heard a rush, and, before he could put himself in a posture of defence or more than barely turn his head, saw a burly figure project itself at Pablo Carbonel and heard the sickening rend of steel in flesh.

Pablo, a completely limp corpse, sagged over the wharfedge and splashed into the river.

The murderer, barefoot and noiseless, vanished into the darkness out of which he had come.

The two Nuñez brothers remarked cheerfully:

"That was Pedro. He said he would kill him."

No one else uttered a word, no one moved.

Luis lit a cigarette.

(4)

Next morning, just as Hawthorne finished his breakfast, an urgent messenger from the Palacio was announced. Going out, he found Captain Garmendia himself, on horseback and with one trooper attending him.

"You are wanted at once, Señor Don Guillermo," he said. "This rascal will walk back to the barracks. Pray take his horse."

In front of the Government House they went past the main entrance, and Hawthorne, through a side gate facing the landing-stairs, where he had never before entered, was ushered at once into the old Jesuits' garden along the Riachuelo. There he found Francia pacing up and down under the orange-trees.

"Come, Don Guillermo," he said, "I need your confirmation of a suspicion I entertain."

He led the way, his flowered dressing-gown flapping oddly about his sabre-sheath and white-silk calves. Under the archway of the narrow passage leading from the garden to the forecourt, he paused and pointed, stepping back.

Hawthorne saw Zorilla beside two soldiers holding between them a pinioned prisoner. He recognised the height, the figure, the nose, the scar. It was indubitably Don Domingo Rodriguez. Before the qualm of certainty that surged through him had abated he heard Francia's half whisper in his ear:

"Did you ever see that man before?" He spoke in French.

"I have," he answered instantly, also in French.

"When and where?" Francia demanded, adding: "Reflect before you reply."

Hawthorne stared the Dictator full in the eyes.

"No reflection is necessary," he declared. "I have never hinted to you that I saw him at all. I acknowledge that I saw him, since the confession can now do him no harm. But I decline to tell you when or where."

"Hoity toity!" Francia exclaimed. "You must have encountered him in some fashion of which I have no suspicion. I shall not press you to disclose anything whatever about that. What I want is to confirm a very definite suspicion I already had before I sent for you."

"Let me put the question differently:

"Is there anything about that man which reminds you of moonlight, a barred window, a wrist wrenched from your clutch, and a dagger tinkling on stone?"

"*Pardieu! c'est lui!*" cried Hawthorne before he thought.

"Yes," the Dictator said solemnly, in Spanish. "It is indeed the nocturnal assassin from whom you saved me, my cousin the rich man who hates me because I thwarted him in an unjust suit at law. I caught you off your guard for once, Don Guillermo. You have confirmed my suspicions. If you protected him from me in the past, that proves all the more cogently your sincerity."

He stalked into the court, Hawthorne following. Beltran stood up from the smaller chair by the table and saluted formally, adding a nod to Hawthorne, who took the third seat at a gesture from Francia as the Dictator settled himself in his curule chair.

"Bring forward the prisoner!" he trumpeted.

"Señor Don Domingo," he queried, "where were you on the night of the twenty-second day of last June?"

The prisoner locked his thin lips, his face mantled in contemptuous disdain.

"You dare not confess?" cried the Dictator. "Then hear me tell you. You were in the angle of this Palacio under my *mirador*, lurking outside my petitioners' window. You wore a woman's *tupoi*, and held a dagger in your hand. But for the quickness of the Señor here at my left you would have killed me. I still bear the scar of your thrust."

In spite of himself, Don Domingo's face showed amazement and avowal.

"Your face convicts you, Señor Don Domingo," Francia sneered.

And he called:

"Zorilla!"

The lieutenant stepped forward some paces.

"Take him out at once," the Dictator commanded. "Get him a priest, but waste no time over it. Shoot him the moment the priest is done with him."

Each leaving the other to hold the prisoner, the two soldiers stepped forward and Francia counted their cartridges. He did the like with a third he had summoned

"Shoot him at once," was his parting order to Zorilla.

As the five disappeared, he said to Hawthorne:

"I am unable to express to you my gratitude for your assistance towards apprehending that man."

"My assistance!" cried Hawthorne. "I never gave you an approach to assistance."

"Did you not?" Francia quizzed, taking huge pinches of snuff. "You do not yet comprehend your part in all this, I see. You will before long, Don Guillermo."

At that moment Bopî shambled up and grunted a message.

"Who?" Francia queried. "Oh, yes. Bring him in before the other one."

A lieutenant and four soldiers convoyed Pedro Carbonel. The Dictator regarded him without any sign of severity.

"Don Pedro," he said, in his courtliest manner, "you stabbed your brother last night."

"I did, Señor Excelentísimo," Carbonel acknowledged.

"That," said Francia, "was worse than murder; it was fratricide."

"Yes, Excellency," was Pedro's reply.

"You deserve to be shot," the Dictator hissed.

"Of a certitude, Excellency," came the sobered man's submissive reply.

Francia beckoned the four soldiers in turn, counted their cartridges, and gave the lieutenant the order.

The six tramped off.

"Bring in the other man," Francia ordered.

In came Captain Marcelino Sanabria superintending four soldiers surrounding a prisoner who walked unbound, with head erect.

With a horrible qualm Hawthorne recognised Leonardo Vera. When he had gazed his fill and turned to Francia, he found the Dictator eyeing him satirically.

"Perhaps you now realise, Don Guillermo," he said, "how I came upon the information which led to Don Domingo's arrest. It was he you had a glimpse of at the cottage window, it was he who went without his portion of honey that evening, it was he who struggled with the mosquitoes while you slept on the platform."

Hawthorne was dumb.

Francia turned to the standing group.

"Don Marcelino," he asked, "why is not this prisoner tied or shackled?"

"He gave his word to come with us," Sanabria replied.

Francia snorted.

"You have some sense," he growled.

Then he addressed the prisoner. "Don Leonardo," he said, "you harboured one of my deadliest enemies."

"Señor Excelentísimo," spoke the yeoman, "I knew not that he was your enemy; I knew him only for a man in distress, a fugitive."

"If a fugitive," Francia retorted, "did that not prove him my enemy?"

"Of that," replied the *chacarero* firmly, "it was not my place to think. It was not my part to enquire how he came to be a fugitive and in distress. I have heard many sermons on the act of the Good Samaritan, but never a word hinting that he should have investigated how the man fell among thieves before he succoured him."

"Would you succour any refugee?" the Dictator queried.

"Excellency," the prisoner answered, "if you yourself were a fugitive, abased and hiding from your enemies, I should give you food and shelter without question."

"Señor Don Leonardo," the Dictator said, "you are a good man and a good citizen. You have been dragged from your family and your farm. The state owes you reparation. As Dictator, I enjoin upon you to accept what is due to you."

He beckoned Captain Sanabria:

"Don Marcelino," he said, "dismiss your men. Escort Don Leonardo to the cavalry stables. When he indicates which horse he prefers give it to him. Go with him to the market and when he chooses a *recado* or saddle, as he prefers, have it girthed upon the horse he has chosen. Then

bid him farewell upon his journey homewards. Give the saddler a signed paper stating the cost of Don Leonardo's equipment and send him here to be paid.

"Señor Don Leonardo," he added, "here is a trifling sum with which to purchase food for your journey and gifts to please your wife and children."

And he gave him ten silver dollars.

The crofter bowed gravely and thanked him in a neatly worded compliment in Guarani.

## CHAPTER XLV

### THE PROFILE

#### (1)

NATURALLY, Hawthorne, on leaving the Palacio, made for the prison. He walked slowly, since, although he was thinking hard, he was thinking confusedly. His dominant thought was that Cecilia was a widow and that the news must reach her; it should be broken to her as gently as possible. His feeling was that he would be gentler with her than any one else in Asuncion. His impulse was to tell her. But the consciousness that he was glad to know her widowed and the fact that he, unwittingly, had been instrumental in her husband's death, produced a hopeless confusion in his thoughts. The contrast between his resistance to temptation after sighting Don Domingo at El Zapo's cottage and his blind betrayal of him after enjoying Leonardo Vera's hospitality appeared a grewsome prank of malevolent fate, and added to the blur over his mental processes. He groped ineffectually for a definite intention and a plan of approach.

He arrived at none.

At the prison he found Cecilia precisely as usual: tall, apparently in perfect health, her complexion pink and fresh, her hair neat, her expression serene. Serenely she continued her embroidery after Hawthorne had seated himself on the stool by the door of the hut and she had re-seated herself on her cot.

"Doña Cecilia," Hawthorne said, "I ask your pardon."

"For what, Señor Don Guillermo?" Cecilia queried.

"For what I am about to tell you," Hawthorne explained.

Cecilia regarded him gravely.

"Señor Don Guillermo," she said, "I don't believe you would say anything to me which I ought not to hear."

"Thank you for your trust in me," said Hawthorne.

"I do trust you, Señor Don Guillermo," she said, "and before I met you I trusted no one in Paraguay; I might say no one on earth. Now I trust Doña Engracia and Doña Pancha, whom I met through you. And I trust you. That makes three. I am rich in friends."

"Then you will not be vexed with me if I am the bearer of bad news?" Hawthorne fumbled.

Cecilia gazed at him attentively.

"Señor Don Guillermo," she said, "I am in Paraguay and in prison. I do not think it likely that I am to be put to death; no woman has yet been executed under the present administration. Therefore, I doubt whether your news can really be bad news."

"It does not concern yourself," Hawthorne said, "but the person whose welfare is nearest to your heart."

Cecilia smiled archly.

"I am not so sure that you know who that is," she teased him roguishly.

Hawthorne's face was dark.

"I am very serious in what I say," he said.

Cecilia's demeanour altered.

"I see that now," she said. "Tell me your bad news."

"I am afraid," Hawthorne fenced, "that it will shock you."

"I am prepared," said Cecilia. "Quickness will now be kindness."

Hawthorne's heart was in his mouth.

"It concerns Don Domingo Rodriguez," he gulped.

Cecilia's expression did not alter a particle.

"Have they captured him?" she asked.

"He was captured," Hawthorne said, "but that is not all."

"He is dead?" Cecilia queried.

Hawthorne nodded.

"Poor Domingo!" Cecilia breathed, her demeanour still unruffled. "I am sorry for him. He was good to me."

She drew a deep breath, but it was not a sigh.

Then she shot a question at Hawthorne:

"Was he captured alone?"

"The *chacarero* who had sheltered him," Hawthorne said, "was brought in with him, but afterwards released."

"I do not mean that," Cecilia explained eagerly. "I mean was any other fugitive captured at the same time?"

"None, as far as I know," Hawthorne acknowledged.

"You would have known," Cecilia sighed, and added:

"Oh, this weary world! Perhaps Domingo is better off than some he left here behind him."

She had shown no sign of grief or indeed of any emotion whatever.

Hawthorne was astounded.

(2)

That night Hawthorne had no stomach for the Plaza or the water-side, yet he longed to ramble about in disguise. He strolled through the crooked lanes south-east of the Franciscan Monastery and the Convent of Mercy. It was a clear, starlit night, warm and windless.

One of the unexpected sensations Hawthorne experienced on these rambles was the revelation that in less than a year he had become so used to wearing a hanger or sabre that without one he felt helpless and unprotected. True, he had a sailor's knife in his belt and his poniard hidden in his bosom, but these were mere last desperate resorts, not weapons for dignified self-assertion.

Therefore when he heard shod feet approaching him and the jingle of side-arms he crept to the edge of the roadway and ensconced himself behind the hedge, which, fortunately, happened to be thornless instead of the prevailing aloes or prickly cactus.

It was already late at night, for he had been wandering about a long time, having encountered no one till now.

Just opposite him the two cavaliers halted.

One said:

"Give me a light."

There was a sound of indrawn breath and then the two



heads were distinct against the darkness in the brief glow between them; for each man held his cigar in his lips.

There was no mistaking the man facing Hawthorne. The faint glow sufficiently disclosed the Caballero nose, the tanned cheek bones, the deep-set eyes, the long narrow irregular face of Estanislao Machain.

Hawthorne was amazed that he should be in the city at night, more amazed that he should be on foot, but most of all amazed at his companion.

It was indeed startling that the two should be together, most startling that they should be conferring in a dark lane at midnight.

For, although Hawthorne did not see his face, he indubitably recognised the shape of the head, the wave of the hair, the ear against the glow, the temple and the cheek.

The other man was Beltran Jaray.

(3)

Hawthorne slept little that night. Normally, gentlemen like Don Estanislao and Beltran would be abroad only on horseback. Except for very short distances only the lower classes ever walked about Asuncion. The mere fact of the two being afoot was in itself suspicious. The district in which he met them precluded Hawthorne from conjecturing any friend's house to which they might be on their way or from which they might be returning. To be as safely alone together as possible was the only object he could think of which could have brought them into that part of the outskirts of the city. Why they should want to be together he could not imagine. He recalled Beltran's remark that Estanislao was nearer to being his friend than any other man in Paraguay; but the recollection of that was wholly overlaid by his sharp and vivid memory of Machain's malignant sneering tones at the breakup of the conspiracy and his innuendoes to the effect that Hawthorne was not the only man in Asuncion who played chess and was invited to sup at the Palacio, that they could get on well enough without him: this just after begging him to attempt Francia's murder over the chess-board.

It was this that haunted his fitful dreams and his hours of wakefulness.

Next morning he was early at the Government House. Francia greeted him cordially:

"What can I do for you?" he queried.

"You can give me permission," Hawthorne said, "to make a request of you just as if you were not a Dictator."

Francia smiled, almost grinned.

"Nobody else," he chuckled, "would venture to make such a request. You have never abused any permission I have given you. Your request is granted."

"Speaking as I should to any other of my friends in Asuncion," said Hawthorne, "I suggest that I should very much like to sup with you to-night and play chess."

Francia knit his brows.

"I should very much like to have you sup with me to-night and play chess," he said, "but I really must devote myself to Beltran. I am worried about that boy. He takes very hard having lost Angelica; continues moody, low-spirited and wretched. Everything seems to irritate him. Even I irritate him. Only while playing chess does he seem to have a respite from his thoughts. Then he appears temporarily relieved.

"He is so depressed that I have more than once kept him in the Palacio all night."

Hawthorne said nothing, but his astonishment appeared on his face.

"You know," Francia began, "that I have several bedrooms always ready for me?"

"No," said Hawthorne, honestly, "I did not know that."

"Well," explained the Dictator, "such is my custom. I find it far more difficult to fall into a sound sleep than before I came to power. I compose myself on my bed, turn, toss and feel more and more wakeful. If I had another bed prepared and in a different room I found I could often attain to instant sleep by changing into that. The habit has grown on me. In various parts of this assemblage of buildings I have as many as nine rooms which are set apart as bedrooms. Sometimes all of them are kept ready, sometimes not all, never fewer than six. The number varies according to the suggestions of my sister Teresa. She looks in here weekly or oftener to inspect my housekeeping and I enjoin upon Bopí and the rest to defer to her opinions.

"Anyhow, having at least six beds standing ready, it is a simple matter to house Beltran overnight. Sometimes he bids me good-night and goes off and yet I find him here for breakfast, whenever he changes his mind and returns. He has keys and I always tell him which door is left unbarred; it is never the same door two nights in succession; if it were, others might learn which it was. No one ever knows except Beltran."

There was a something doting, even fatuous about Francia's expression and tone as he said this.

Hawthorne became uneasy and more and more embarrassed.

Francia regarded him with a beaming smile.

"You see," he said, "how much my society means to Beltran just now. I am the lad's only solace. I must not neglect him. But for those other considerations I should certainly have you to sup to-night. I am pleased that you suggested it of your own accord."

There fell a silence.

"Is there anything else you wish to say?" Francia queried crisply.

Hawthorne nerved himself.

"Yes," he said, "if I am not to spend the evening with you there is something I must tell you now. I should have preferred to tell you more at leisure and more alone."

"We are at leisure," Francia said. "I give you all the time you choose to take. I shall permit no interruptions. Speak out."

Hawthorne experienced a sort of inward panic. His thoughts whirled, what he said surprised himself. Half in a daze he heard himself say:

"Now that Don Domingo Rodriguez is out of the way forever, would it not be possible for you to consider liberating his widow?"

Fleeting expressions, each lasting for the fraction of a second, pursued each other across Francia's countenance. Successively he looked astounded, quizzical, sly and incensed. He fixed Hawthorne with an icy, brow-beating stare. His voice trembled, but more as if with suppressed laughter than as if with anger. He said:

"Señor Don Guillermo, I am displeased. I have told you in plain words that I am most eager to liberate this most

embarrassing of my prisoners. I am. But I am a better judge than you of when to release those in my *cuartels*. I yielded to your arguments about the Chilabers. The result would scarcely incline me to accede in any other case. You should pay me the compliment of crediting that I mean what I say. You yourself are scarcely less eager to know this lady at liberty. You show yourself a poor courtier in this regard.

"But this is not what displeases me. I am displeased and rightly, because, for the first time, you act insincerely. This was not what you came here to say. A moment ago you had no intention of alluding to this lady. Your face is transparent. You suddenly changed your mind.

"Señor Don Guillermo, either say what you meant to say or make your farewells."

Hawthorne drew a deep breath.

"Excelentísimo Señor," he said, "you are a wonderful man."

"No proof of that to-day," the Dictator snapped. "Any one could have read your face. But don't say 'Excelentísimo Señor' to me again."

"You said 'Señor Don Guillermo' to me," Hawthorne countered.

"True," Francia smiled. "Pardon me. You will admit I had enough provocation. And now, frankly, tell me what you came to tell, what you meant to tell me to-night."

"You are in danger of assassination," Hawthorne said.

"No news to me," Francia chuckled, "I always am."

"I mean," Hawthorne strangled, "more than usual."

"If you are trying to warn me against a specific and imminent attempt," the Dictator said coolly, "an enterprise you think you foresee and which you think I do not foresee, you'll have to be more definite than that to be of any use to me."

Hawthorne wrestled with himself in spirit.

"You are in danger," he said, "from the man you trust most."

"Still too vague!" Francia commented, "and, anyhow, who are you to assume that you know the man I trust most? You could not name even the man I seem to trust most. And, even when I seem to trust most, I am well on guard. Before I had known you twenty-four hours, I gave you

permission to inspect all my prisons. Be sure I had gone over in mind, before I wrote the order, all the different sorts of mischief you might set on foot if secretly ill-disposed to me, and had sketched plans for blocking every game you could play against me with the opportunities I put in your hands. Be assured that each of these plans was set working against you before you entered the public prison next day.

"It is so with all about me. Olegario and Lorenzo and Basilio could not steal a *maravedi* between them, not if they formed a partnership against me; Ponciano couldn't bungle a single court-case, nor Gumesindo shame me before an envoy, nor Andres nor Policarpo misrepresent me, nor Joaquin start an insurrection. I hold them all in the hollow of my hand. As you've learned at chess, discovering a check is my favourite move and my most effective attack, especially when the game seems lost.

"And now, either leave me to play my own gambit unhelped or drop this folly of veiled allusions. Quit deceiving yourself into thinking you are helping me by nebulous hints. Be more explicit or begone."

Hawthorne thought hard.

Then he told what he had seen and where, ending:

"A young man and an elder man: extremely ill-assorted."

"Still oracular, still orphic." Francia commented.

"Still with one thought on warning me and three on shielding the rascals. I fancy I understand your tenderness. I believe you mean the very couple I myself followed a long while not far from where you met them and about the time you encountered them. I needed no warning. But I am glad to have your confirmation. I was, and am, loath to believe what I must believe."

He stared gloomily at the pavement.

Hawthorne could not conjecture whether Francia was telling the truth or indulging his vanity by one of his pretences to omniscience.

In either case he saw there was no use in saying anything further.

## (4)

Not long after Hawthorne's departure Francia set himself to writing. He threw down quill after quill, erased, interlined, tore up, rewrote, copied and recopied until he had a paper to his mind. Then he summoned Lieutenant Ortellado

"Don Aquiles," he said, laying down the smoking stick of sealing wax, "I am about to entrust to you the most important arrest I have ever ordered."

Ortellado bowed.

"Take this paper," the Dictator resumed. "Break the seals only when you are alone and unobserved. Read it well. Consider it carefully. It is a delicate assignment. I realise its difficulty, but I shall have you shot if you fail in any particular. The man must be arrested between the hours named. To arrest him before the first or after the last will ruin the plans I have in mind. He must not be injured in any way. A bruise, a scratch on him anywhere would be fatal to my purposes. Handle him as carefully as if he were my own and only son. Most of all, he must be arrested without any one suspecting that he is under arrest. Only yourself and your four assistants, whom you may choose, must know of his arrest. Equally in secret he must be taken to the designated spot and there disposed of as I have written. The slightest variation from my orders in time, place or manner will wreck my design."

"I accept the mission, Excellency," spoke Ortellado. "I shall not fail you."

## (5)

It was well on to midnight when Francia let Beltran out of the main entrance to the Palacio. The air was hot and still, the sky overhead cloudless, the stars every little while dimmed by the reflection of distant lightning from a great thunder-storm that muttered on the horizon far away over the Gran Chaco.

"No," said Beltran, "I won't change my mind and sleep here, and I shall not change my mind later and return. I

think I'll get a horse and ride out to Itapuá. I'll sleep better out there. I can be at the barracks in time in the morning."

"*Vaya Usted con Dios,*" was all that Francia said.

When the last bolt had clanged behind him and the sound of retreating footsteps had wholly died away, Beltran turned, strolled the length of the deserted Plaza, keeping about its middle line, and halted before the Cathedral porch, where the tower hid him from the late loungers along the Calle Comercio, if the lightning-glares were bright enough to have made him visible.

He stood a long time staring into the blackness inside the dark porch.

Then he strolled on along the river-flank of the Cathedral, on past the church of San Blas, until he came to the cross-street on his right that led to Casa Velarde. He stared up this a while, walked leadenly along it, stopped twice and stared at the dim outlines of the silent house, strolled on round it and the Franciscan Monastery, kept on to his left round the back of the Velarde orchard, picked his way past the little marsh that bordered and overflowed the lane towards the Church of San Roque and so, still keeping to his left, came back to the front of Don Toribio's mansion. There he stood awhile. Then he retraced his steps and circled round it in the other direction. Again he stood and sighed in the dark.

Following the way he had come, he returned to the Cathedral porch. Between the three pillars that supported its three archways, under the middle of the middle arch, he knelt down, knelt on both knees. He clasped his hands and bowed his head. He remained there a long time.

When he stood up he walked firmly and steadily to the side gate of the Palacio facing the landing stairs, where Hawthorne had been admitted to identify Don Domingo Rodriguez. This door he unlocked and let himself into the Jesuits' garden. He stood and listened. He unbuckled his sword-belt and laid the sabre with it down by the garden wall. Softly traversing the garden, he stood and listened at the door of the library. Noiselessly he let himself into the library. Again he stood and listened, but he heard only his own breathing and the beating of his heart.

Presently he began to move, inch by inch. Inch by inch

he groped his way through the darkness of the library, scarcely helped by the faint reflections of the distant lightning-flares which now and again made plain the outline of the windows. He passed the telescope, the big table, the theodolite, and touched the inner door. Again he listened. Cautiously he tried the door. Without a click he opened it. He stepped into the passage. The solid, heavy door at the end of the passage let in no light, the passage was pitch-dark. Across it he groped to the wall and along the wall to a door. Again he listened. Then he tried the door, felt it give noiselessly, slipped through it and knelt on the brick floor. Kneeling, he leaned until he was on all fours, his head turned sideways, his ear almost against the bricks. This position he kept until a gleam of distant lightning made the window-space shine faintly and he could descry the outline of the bed against the momentary glimmer.

The silhouette of the bed's top was even and smooth. The bed was untenanted.

At once he stood up, stepped through the door and shut it behind him. A few yards along the same wall to his right he found a second similar door and repeated the same manœuvres.

Then he felt his way to the angle of the passage and followed a long, narrow corridor branching off to the left. From it, with the same precautions, with the same slow movements, with the same noiselessness, he entered three rooms on its left-hand side. In each the bed was undisturbed.

After leaving the third he returned along the narrow corridor, passed the end of the passage from the library and turned to his left along another corridor at right angles to the first. On the right-hand side of this he successively tried and passed two doors. In each room he made out an untouched bed. The time needed was less in each room, for the storm over the Chaco was drawing nearer and the flashes of lightning were more frequent and brighter, the thunder no longer a mere mutter, but a heavy rumble.

As he stood up to leave the second room there came a series of almost continuous flashes and he saw brilliantly lit up the head of the inlet, the second Jesuits' bridge across it just opposite the window, the orchard across the



Riachuelo and even, beyond the orchard, the roof of the Casal Mansion, the corrugations of its tiles amazingly distinct in the brief glare.

From this room he continued on down the corridor, the smell of dried leaf-tobacco growing more and more insistent, and found and tried the door of an eighth bedroom.

The moment he passed the door he made out an unevenness in the middle of the bed.

Instantly he stood rigid, listening.

He heard no sound.

Moving so slowly that no movement was perceptible even to himself, he neared the bedstead.

His shoes did not creak, his clothing did not rustle, he made no noise as he came.

Closer and closer he drew, the lightning-flashes guiding him.

He could see nothing but a long, low ridge down the middle of the bed, as if the sleeper were lying face down, arms under and all covered, head and all, by the sheet.

When his knee all but touched the bedstead he paused and listened. He heard no sound whatever.

He leaned over the bed.

There came a vivid flash.

Suddenly, both hands open, the fingers outspread, he felt the shape under the sheet.

It was merely the bolster of the bed, turned lengthways and covered from the dust. The bed had not been made up.

When he was outside that room he moved with less precaution, crossed the corridor and a room beyond it and the tobacco-scented courtyard, lighted again and again by the quickening lightning.

Beyond the court he entered and crossed a small empty room, groped across a dark passageway and found a stair. Feeling every stone step of it, he went up, inch by inch. From its top he moved forward, not inch by inch, but line by line, barely breathing. The door, which he finally found, he groped with long before he opened it. As he opened it a glaring flash revealed the window opposite him, the bed across it, and, outside, the roof of the Cabildo.

Imperceptibly he sank on one knee. Alert, he waited for the next flash, his head low.

The flash came.

He saw the outline of the form under the bed-clothes; the shape of a tall, thin man lying on his back. Even in that fraction of a second he could make out the rumpled edges of the pillow bulged up on either side of the man's head. He moved sideways a trifle and waited for the next flash.

It showed the profile of the upturned face.

Against the whitened sky he saw plain the chin and forehead and between them the unmistakable chisel-edged Caballero nose.

He stood up and listened.

Nearer the bed he crept and nearer.

He leaned over it.

He could hear the breathing of the man, who made no other sound, no motion whatever.

He slid his hand inside his shirt and gripped the hilt of his poniard.

He braced his feet apart, leaned forward and waited for one more flash.

With a ripping noise the lightning blazed close at hand.

He aimed at the heart and struck his dagger deep.

The thunder burst in an appalling crash, in crash after crash, shaking the walls and floor.

There had been only one shudder from the body in the bed as he struck, no other movement, no sound.

His ears crushed by the explosions of the thunder, he fled down the stairs and along the corridors.

At the garden gate he buckled on his sword-belt, his hands shaking.

He locked the gate behind him.

Just as he reached his horse, the storm burst over the city.

## CHAPTER XLVI

## INTERCESSION

## (1)

NEXT morning, under the beautiful rain-washed sky, through the charming rain-freshened landscape, Damiano, Beltran's mulatto servant, rode his tall, cream-coloured mule not many yards behind his master's taller stallion from Itapuá to the city. At the barrack gate he saw his master dismount and fling his reins to an orderly. As he was about to turn his mule he saw Captain Garmendia appear under the archway of the barrack-yard and salute his Colonel. Simultaneously Lieutenant Ortellado, two privates beside him, stood up from the bench on the right-hand side of the entrance and Lieutenant Zorilla, also with two privates, stood up from the bench on the left-hand side of the door, where they had been similarly lolling. Damiano saw that Captain Garmendia said something, saw his master halt, saw each lieutenant seize one of his elbows, saw a pistol in Zorilla's free hand. He saw Beltran hand his sword, hilt first, to Captain Garmendia.

Damiano was a wise mulatto. He put his mule into a quiet canter towards Itapuá. Only once he halted and then to speak a few words to a peon he encountered. When he was clear of the city he lashed and spurred his mount to its top speed.

Beltran had had no distinct thoughts the night before. His inherited intelligence, his acquired sagacity, his powers of insight and foresight, all his faculties and capabilities were drowned, swept away, annihilated by a hot wave of primitive passion. He had acted merely on the irresistible determination that no other man should possess Ventura. Even a sound sleep had not restored him. He was still mentally numb, had ridden into town without a plan and was arrested before he was aware what was happening to him.

Zorilla, his face all malignant exultation, was pinioning him cruelly. Ortellado gently insisted that the cords should be no tighter than was necessary to make him totally helpless.

So pinioned he was marched to the Government House; past Captain Marcelino Sanabria and some dozen privates, wide-eyed and dumb, in charge of the entrance; past Bopí, half lounging, half crouching under the arcade of the *patio*; past the neatly arranged official table, the two smaller chairs and the Dictator's curule seat empty beside it; through a door in the far left-hand rear corner of the courtyard, along a corridor; across the tobacco-scented courtyard and on up the stair, the stair he had climbed the night before.

In the open doorway of the bedroom he was halted.

The sunlight poured through the broad window, bathed in intense light the small bed and what was on it, glittered intolerably on the erect haft of his poniard.

He gazed at that sparkle and recognised the hilt.

He recognised also, recognised with a hideous qualm of amazement and realisation, the face of the dead man.

It was the face of Estanislao Machain!

The door on his left at the head of the bed opened.

In the doorway stood the Dictator.

He was pale, chalky pale, pale as the corpse on the cot. He staggered on his feet, swayed, gripped the jambs of the door. Mute he stared at Beltran, his face empty of anger, menace, or reproach, empty of majesty and of self-confidence, the face of a man sick to death.

Beltran straightened up, suddenly himself and permeated by the buoyant calm with which Castilian blue-blood confronts inevitable doom.

Three times Francia strove to speak. Twice he made only an inarticulate sound, a sort of choking moan. The third effort resulted in human words: words uttered with the voice of a man at the point of death.

"Señor Don Beltran," he said, "you returned to this building last night after you left it."

"I did," Beltran acknowledged, curtly.

"You came here to kill a man," the Dictator continued.

"*Sí, Señor*," was Beltran's answer.

"This," rumbled Francia, "was not the man you came to kill."

"*No, Señor*," Beltran confessed.

"That," said Francia, pointing, "is your dagger where you drove it."

Beltran bowed.

"Take him down into the *patio*," the Dictator commanded.

"What shall we do with the corpse?" Zorilla interjected briskly.

"Have it buried," Francia snapped, "but bring me the dagger. Also bring me the little gag that is in his mouth; it is worth more than he ever was, dead or alive."

As he was marched along Beltran could hear the dragging, enfeebled gait of the autocrat following behind.

By the official chair he was halted and faced about towards it. But the Dictator did not sit down. He stood up by the table, leaning on it heavily with his left hand, breathing hard. After a long silence he spoke:

"Put him in the farthest cell in the right-hand corridor under the cavalry barracks."

Zorilla saluted, his face all evil glee.

"And shall we rivet *grillos* on his ankles?" he queried, gloatingly.

Francia stood up to his full height, his hand on his sword-hilt, his face black as a thunder-cloud.

"A *barra de grillos*!" he roared, "on him!"

All in one motion his sabre leapt from its scabbard, flashed aloft and swept down. The blow was terrific. The razor-edged blade, swung with the fury of a maniac, shore clean through Zorilla's skull, eyebrow and jaw.

He fell like a pole-axed ox.

A saucer-shaped piece of his head, with one ear and the outer corner of one eye, rolled across the courtyard pavement.

Francia wiped and sheathed his sabre.

"Remove that carrion," he commanded.

When the bustling soldiers had vanished with their burden the Dictator sat down heavily.

When he looked up, Ortellado saluted.

"Orders?" he enquired.

"You heard the order," Francia snarled.

"El Supremo," said Ortellado softly, "has not said whether the prisoner is to be shackled."

Francia eyed him and Ortellado met his gaze.

"No shackles," the Dictator finally said, brokenly. "But if he escapes you die."

## (2)

Damiano's mule dropped dead just in front of the verandah of Doña Juana's mansion. The old lady had heard the hoof-beats and was on the edge of the portico as soon as Damiano. He spoke briefly. Her orders to her aroused household were equally brief. With no time lost she was in the saddle on her way to the city; Damiano behind her, this time on a horse.

At the Palacio she nodded to Captain Sanabria and marched in, unannounced. Francia, by this time collected, rose at sight of her. When they were both seated he asked:

"And what brings you here, *Madrina*?"

"Beltran's life," she answered.

"I have given no orders for his execution," the Dictator informed her.

That brought the poor old lady to her knees, her hands gripping Francia's, her trembling lips babbling entreaties. She called him "godson," "Gaspar," every name of childhood, every endearment proper from a god-mother.

"Oh, Gaspar," she begged, "spare me this last. There is no Isquibel alive in Paraguay, no Jaray save Beltran. I bore eighteen children, Gaspar. Six died young, and I used to think I had felt grief over those little graves. I raised nine sons and they all married. My three daughters married. I had thirty grandchildren. And which are left beside Beltran? Only that sly Preciado Miranda, and half-witted Carlos Echagüe at Villa Rica. Espinosa robbed me of six sons in one year, all murdered under colour of law. Arconte Lopez shot Ildefonso. Salvador fell in the invasion. More Isquibels and Jarays perished in the campaign than all the other families in Paraguay. I have only Beltran left."

Francia's face was harder and harder as her wails grew louder and her beseechings more frantic.

"Zorilla!" he called, a call bitten off suddenly.

Then he called louder:

"Don Marcelino!"

When Captain Sanabria came he curtly ordered:

"Drag away this crazy woman!"

When the courtyard was empty and quiet he sat bent forward, his hands clenched.

When he looked up he saw Ventura approaching.

She was corseted as always and was all in black, with a black lace mantilla over her head, relieved only by the pearl brooch at her bosom and the pearl aigrette in her hair. Her lips were bloodless, and her complexion lead-grey. She moved like a sleep-walker.

Francia rose to his feet instantly and gazed at her as she came on, her eyes as unflinching as his.

He took her hand, bent over it and kissed it ceremoniously.

When he would have withdrawn his hand she held it and caught the other. She took a short step nearer and they stood, gazing into each other's eyes. Before he realised she leaned and kissed his thin, clean-shaven, tight-shut lips.

He sprang back, tall in his blue uniform.

"Why?" he cried.

"The first and the last," said Ventura, seating herself on one of the smaller chairs.

Francia settled into his.

"Why do you say that?" he demanded.

Ventura tapped the toe of her slipper on the bricks.

"I do not know in what manner this conference of ours is to end," she said, "but I am sure that this is to be our last interview."

"Why do you say that?" Francia repeated.

"Before we part," she said, "you will understand."

"Speak on," the Dictator uttered.

Ventura did not hesitate.

"I have come," she said, "to obtain from you an order for the liberation of Don Beltran Jaray."

"How did you learn that he had been arrested?" Francia queried.

"His man Damiano saw the arrest," Ventura explained. "He told my peon Ramon, and Ramon came at once to me."

"Why do you ask me to liberate this prisoner?" the Dictator asked.

"Because I love him," replied Ventura simply.

Francia did not start, nor did his expression change.

"When did you discover this?" he queried.

"When I heard of his arrest," Ventura declared, evenly. "I never even suspected my real feelings for him until that moment."

"Do you know why he was arrested?" the Dictator enquired.

"I do not," Ventura replied, "but I conjecture that it was because he made an attempt upon your life."

"And you plead for a foiled assassin!" Francia cried.

"I cannot help myself. I must plead for him," Ventura said. "I love him."

"Have you any idea," the Dictator questioned, "why he stooped to such heinous villainy?"

"I conjecture," she said, "that his perfidy was due to jealousy. I was to marry you and he is in love with me."

Then Francia did start, paler even than before. He looked at her and looked away.

"I had no guess of that," he muttered. "I thought he had been brooding on account of Angelica. I supposed he had no real motive, but had been egged on by that scoundrel Machain, with his serpent's tongue."

"Then why," asked Ventura, "is not Don Estanislao also in a dungeon?"

"Because," retorted the Dictator, "I had him laid in my bed, bound and gagged, and Beltran killed him in my place."

"Oh!" cried Ventura.

Francia pressed his interrogatory.

"When," he said, "did you discover his passion for you?"

Ventura reflected.

"It was after I named to you Saint John's Day for our wedding day," she said. "I think three days later, on May 24th, more than two weeks ago. I met him in front of the church porch."

"Did he tell you?" came the query.

"Not in words," was the response.

"But you understood?" he insisted.

"Yes, I understood," Ventura stated; "any woman would have comprehended."

"But you did not realise that you loved him?" he pursued.

"As I told you," said Ventura, eyeing him severely, "I never suspected myself until I heard of his arrest to-day."



"You love him?" he repeated incredulously.

"I do," said Ventura firmly.

"Do you not despise him?" he queried, more incredulously.

"No," said Ventura simply, "I only pity him and love him."

"And you expect me," the Dictator browbeat her, "to acquiesce in the release of this assassin not merely in spite of your asking it, but because you ask it?"

"I do expect it," said Ventura tenaciously. "You told me you could refuse me nothing."

Francia groaned.

"And if I so far forget my duty to Paraguay as to grant your petition," he questioned, "what do you mean to do with him when he is at liberty?"

"Marry him," said Ventura calmly, "and take him with me to San Bernardino."

"What?" the Dictator exploded.

Ventura returned his gaze without the flicker of an eyelash.

"Do you not rather expect," Francia hissed, "that I have him dragged here and that I bid my guards hack the two of you to pieces before my eyes?"

"No," said Ventura steadily. "That sort of cheap brutality would be inevitable in similar circumstances from any of the local chieftains like the *caudillos* of the pampas. It would be natural to a small man like Ramirez at Corrientes, if, indeed, he is yet in power at Corrientes: men like Ramirez do not long retain mastery. You are too great a man for that kind of barbarous ferocity. You are master of Paraguay because you are master of yourself. You have all your life prided yourself on keeping your word in small things and great. You gave me your word, solemnly, more than once. You will keep it."

"Señorita," said the Dictator, "carried away by my love for her, I told my affianced wife that I could refuse her nothing. You have the hardihood to tell me that you propose to nullify the pact between us on the faith of which I made that promise, that you mean to marry another man and that man a red-handed murderer in duress awaiting retribution, yet you hold me to my promise after you have destroyed the base of it!"

"You gave the promise without qualification," Ventura said, "not as a bridegroom to his betrothed, but as Gaspar de Francia to Ventura Velarde. You will keep it."

"Señorita," Francia pursued, "do you not think there is something grotesque, something almost comical, in requesting an absolute ruler, the autocrat of all his world, passionately in love and eager for his wedding-day only twelve days off, to forego his bride and hand her over to another man and that man a felon traitor under sentence?"

"It would be unutterably ridiculous," Ventura admitted, "in reference to any man on earth except you. You are lord not only of all this part of the world, but of your own passions. You will keep your word."

"But," Francia insisted, "regard me not as a ruler, but as a human being, is it not fantastic to expect any man to rise to such superhuman, even supernatural, heights of Quixotry?"

"Again," said Ventura, "it would be absurd towards any man except you. To every other man I ever knew, certainly to every South American I ever knew, love means merely the desire for the bodily possession of a specified woman. Love from her, even consent from her, even acquiescence from her, would be quite unnecessary to the satisfaction of his desires; reluctance, resistance, hatred even, would be rather an added piquancy to the flavour of triumph. You are moulded on altogether another pattern of manhood. You are wholly above such pettiness now as you have always been in the past. You told me the truth when you said you never desired any woman except Petrona, never regarded the creatures who could be purchased, never wanted any woman, even in imagination, unless she was your fit mate and wanted you. You sometimes appear petty, but you never are petty, never have been petty. You are wholly above descending now to what has always been beneath you. Your manhood is altogether upon too imperial a scale. What would be superhuman to any other man is natural to you. I regret as much as you the shattering of our dream; regret it more since you will have no sense of guilt to haunt you when memories of it return. I did not want to be the commonplace wife of a mediocre *astanciero*, least of all of a man capable of great things and

in reach of great ambitions who failed to attain his possibilities through his own defects of character. I wanted to be the consort of a great man and a great ruler and revel in his companionship and in solacing his trials and uplifting him to the pinnacle of his mighty powers.

"My dream is shattered. I mourn for it as you do.

"But, if I no longer desire you, you no longer desire me. That is your magnanimous nature. It will now be no real sacrifice for you to resign me; as it would now be the uttermost sacrifice for me to resign myself to you, just the sacrifice you refused to accept last February and which I then truthfully denied that I was making in pledging myself to mate with you. There was then no other man. Lady Baxendale was right. To a loveless marriage there always enters, later or sooner, the other man. Thank God, in our case, he appeared before my realisation brought us any shame."

"Señorita," Francia said, "when you came here you said you were not certain of the outcome of this interview. You appear to have been very sure. What was your uncertainty?"

"Gaspar," said Ventura, "there was just a chance, just one little chance in a million, that I might have been mistaken in my estimate of you, that you might be, after all, merely an ordinary man, made great by circumstances, that you were not, in fact, the illustrious man I thought you, not the august, heroic man I have found you."

Francia winced.

"And suppose," he said feebly, "I am not what you think me? Suppose I am about to refuse your petition and order Beltran's execution? What then?"

"Then," said Ventura raptly, "I shall never see another day. I shall not survive Beltran. In heaven or on earth, in purgatory or in hell, I am wholly Beltran's."

In a great fervour of emotion Francia snatched a pen and wrote an order, wrote two orders.

"Madame," he said in French, "here is the order upon the jailers for the release of your lover; here is the order to the Bishop to dispense with the banns and marry you two at once. You have won. I yield.

"And may God bless and keep you forever."

There was a moment's pause.

Then Francia's manner changed, his face was convulsed.

"And make haste, Madam, make haste," he gasped. "I cannot keep this level of celestial exaltation long. Beware lest I am human, after all. Despatch your wedding and flee to San Bernadino.

"And remember, any Velarde or Jaray who ever crosses the line of the Salado and Lake Ipacaray dies."

"I shall remember only," said Ventura, "that north of that line, I and mine are permitted life and happiness by your magnanimity."

## CHAPTER XLVII

### DUST AND ASHES

NO indication of any dread that Francia's vindictive disposition might dominate him appeared in Ventura's behaviour. She walked with Beltran from the cavalry barrack across the Plaza, into Calle Concepcion, and past the Recalde and Mayorga houses to her father's. As soon as Doña Juana declared herself able to mount her palfrey Beltran set out with his grandmother to Itapuá to commence and speed preparations for migrating to San Bernardino. The next morning they rode into the city at dawn, and, soon after sunrise, Beltran and Ventura were married at the Encarnacion church, before a gathering of most of the old Spaniards of Asuncion and its neighbourhood, with not a few Creoles. Immediately after the wedding Beltran, Ventura, Doña Juana, Don Toribio and Carlota, with a caravan of carts, wagons and pack mules, and a mighty retinue of servants, attendants and peons, started on their journey to San Bernardino, stopping that night at Luque at the *estancia* of Don Pio Casal.

Hawthorne accompanied the cavalcade to Itapuá, and there bade them farewell. Carmelo and Rafael rode on to Luque, but Desiderio and Don Vicente, Don Gregorio and a score of other cavaliers, who had formed a sort of escort of honour for the exiles, returned to the city with Hawthorne.

After his siesta he received an invitation to sup at the Palacio.

He found Francia grim, pale and haggard, but entirely himself.

"Don Guillermo," he said, "we have been used to speak to each other eye to eye, as the Guaycarús say, without concealment. There is no use in my wearing a mask. I have had the worst shock of my life, and am still shaken and unnerved. I shall be but a gloomy table-comrade, I fear. But we must all of us make the best of life as it comes, and I promise to be as companionable as I can. It was good of you to come and try to cheer me up."

"It is an honour," said Hawthorne, "to hear you say this. And I trust I shall soon see you as cheerful as usual."

"Humph!" snorted Francia. "If you can really cheer me up you will deserve to be burnt alive in the Plaza as a dangerous magician."

At the table he stood as if in a brown study. There was a long and awkward silence. Then, instead of inviting Hawthorne to be seated he began to pace up and down a few paces each way, knitting his brows.

He paused, facing Hawthorne.

"Señor Don Guillermo," he said, "I am worse shaken than I realised. Pardon me, but, if we are to sup together agreeably, I must make a humiliating confession. I find that the sight of a weapon on another man is altogether too much for me. Weapons I cannot see I do not mind, but a visible weapon unmans me. Would it be asking too much to request you to lay aside your belt and hanger?"

"Not too much to ask nor to command, if you choose to command rather than to ask," said Hawthorne, gracefully, unbuckling his belt.

He stood the sabre against the nearest orange tree.

When they were seated Francia remarked:

"I am well pleased with you, Don Guillermo. You have comported yourself with much discretion. Did you realise why I wanted you to confine yourself to the city and suburbs?"

"No," Hawthorne confessed, "I did not. I have not thought about it at all."

"I wanted," the Dictator explained, "time to have my emissaries discover and locate all the new nitriaries created in the interest of your conspiracy. Also I wanted them to complete some other similar duties. I am very well pleased

with you, Don Guillermo. I knew Doméque had a notable capacity for organisation, but it required an impulse from you to set free his energy. Through your agency Paraguay possesses four hundred registered nitriaries in addition to those already in existence when you came; and I have added to my stores some six hundred pounds of good, clean saltpetre. Besides the state sulphur mine I have another and a far better one. My supplies of willow-charcoal are quadrupled. Also Paraguay is fortified by the activity of twenty Catalan bloomeries turning out a steady product of malleable steel and of six blast-ovens producing priceless ingots of cast-iron.

"I do not mean to exert any compulsion or pressure upon your freedom of action, indeed, I promise never to abuse you in any such way: I have far too much to thank you for. And I have not yet tried whether persuasion would be effectual towards inducing you to engage in the manufacture of gunpowder and the founding of cannon in my interest, as you proposed to do for my destruction. We will let that matter lie at present and perhaps talk of it on some other occasion. What I wish to emphasise now is that even if you never make an ounce of powder for me or cast even one four-pounder, I have much reason to be grateful to you on mere grounds of increased material for munitions. Do you wonder I am well pleased with you?"

"No!" said Hawthorne, dazedly.

"Well," the Dictator pursued, "what I want to learn is, how well are you pleased with me? I know that a year ago you came to Paraguay with the intention of overthrowing a harsh, bloodthirsty, implacable tyrant; I know that a few days ago you clinked glasses with me and toasted me as Paraguay's ideal executive. I am curious as to the precise meaning of your toast and as to the stages by which your observations led you to your conclusions."

Hawthorne ruminated.

"As to the mass of Paraguayans," he said, "I behold them innately and unalterably incapable not merely of self-government, but of taking any part in or materially influencing the policies of any form of government. The Guaranies and the peons of European descent are alike of such a nature that they must be either sheep harried by the wolf or sheep guarded by the shepherd. *Tapés, chacareros* or

*hacendados*, they are all of one kind, submissive and stupid.

"The aristocracy I grossly overestimated: they are so plausible of speech, so resolute in demeanour. I judge them capable of spurts of valour, but not of tenacity of purpose; of destructive unanimity, but not of permanent cohesion; of spectacular self-assertion, but not of patriotic self-effacement. They appear to me prone to self-seeking, but incapable of mutual subordination. In their hands no truly democratic government could exist. If a republican form of government were set going in Paraguay it must degenerate into an oligarchy of placeholders fattening on plunder from the treasury or more likely into a tyranny veiled under the forms of popular government.

"I conclude that, although I believe in self-government as theoretically best for all men everywhere, yet, practically, here and now, as Paraguayans are and as Paraguay is, the best government for this country and people is a benevolent absolutism. It is quite as obvious that you are the only man in Paraguay capable of maintaining order as it is that you are the only man enjoying the confidence of the people. Your popularity was as manifest during the convention as your preeminence is at all times."

"You consider my administration commendable?" Francia queried.

"Not in all its details," Hawthorne replied sturdily.

"I presume not," the Dictator grunted. "For instance, have you heard how Zorilla came to his end?"

"I have," Hawthorne answered.

"I suppose," Francia pursued, his eyes on Hawthorne's, "that in New England you would call that a murder?"

"We should," Hawthorne affirmed unflinchingly, "and so would most of civilised mankind."

"You don't mince words," the Dictator growled. "Now attend to me. You acknowledge that the convention empowered me to make, interpret and execute laws of all sorts?"

"Certainly," Hawthorne conceded.

"You acknowledge my right as Dictator to order Zorilla shot without reason given?"

"Yes," Hawthorne admitted.

"What is the difference," Francia pursued, "between ordering him shot and killing him myself?"

"The difference," Hawthorne rejoined steadily, "between an execution and a murder."

"Pooh!" the Dictator snorted. "Hadn't I the right to gazette myself executioner?"

"Not on the spur of the moment," Hawthorne maintained fearlessly.

"That is the kind of injustice I meet with from all men," Francia protested. "I had reprimanded Zorilla repeatedly for fiendish cruelty where he might have been merciful in his interpretation of my orders. I had rebuked him for insolence to me. Finally my patience gave way, and I said to him:

"'Señor Don Mateo, you make me unpopular with your ruffianism, you anger me by your impertinence. If you maltreat another victim I'll have you shot; if you presume again I'll kill you myself.'"

"I warn no man twice."

Hawthorne bowed.

"I am willing to admit," he said, "that what would seem a murder elsewhere may be a legal execution in Paraguay."

"Thanks!" the Dictator grunted. "Awhile ago you said you did not commend my administration in all its details. Did that imply commendation for my rule in general?"

"Yes," Hawthorne replied.

"Holding that view," Francia said, "are you willing to push our schemes for amplifying the *yerba*-trade?"

"I am," Hawthorne affirmed.

"Such being the case," Francia continued, "the sooner you set out for Atirá the better."

"What?" cried Hawthorne.

"Certainly," said the Dictator, calmly. "Don Lupercio has now nothing against me, as I am not to marry his niece. You can talk him around in three days; the male Velardes are all ductile as wax, he most of all; and then you can push all your auxiliary preparations for *yerba*-curing and packing, along with *yerba*-growing. Meanwhile, I shall perfect preliminaries towards making *yerba* a government monopoly, which I have long meditated. When all our local arrangements are in good train, you can prepare to sail for Europe with your first cargo of *yerba*."



Hawthorne looked his amazement.

"Either give it up altogether," said Francia, "or promote it vigorously. And now, since our meal is despatched, let us go to chess."

In the library Hawthorne won three short games.

Francia pushed back his chair, lit a fresh cigar and began to pace up and down, scowling and glum.

"I cannot play chess to-night," he said. "I am still shaken and unstrung. Shutting myself up as I did last night did not benefit me. I did not grow calmer, I only brooded and could not read or occupy myself. Your visit to-night is doing me good, but I am not fit for chess."

He took short turns like a caged beast, chewing at his cigar.

Then he burst out into an impassioned tirade:

"It is not so much what has befallen me as how it happened that maddens me. I can see now that I was and am to blame. No man can carry to a successful conclusion two incompatible purposes. I was foredoomed to failure because I was blind. I might have married and raised a family of sons and found one capable of succeeding me or seemingly so. Likely enough I'd have had no better luck than Septimius Severus or Oliver Cromwell, but all might have gone smoothly as long as I lived, and I might have died happy in the promise of stability for Paraguay's prosperity. Again, I might have chosen a grown man fit to be my successor, deputed to him part of the cares of government and found him all I thought him, with a like result. But the two lines of policy could not succeed together, could hardly appear to succeed. Even had the house of cards outlasted me I should have been merely repeating Micipsa's blunder and fostering a Jugurtha to exterminate my progeny; no man born of woman could rise superior to the temptation. I know all that now, and I should have seen it from the first.

"But even after I had garnished my fool's paradise it need not have ended in just this hideous way. I suffer at the loss of Ventura. I loved her, loved her hungrily. But a settled man of forty-five cannot and does not love with the furious passion that consumes a young man in his first prime. I loved her; but, while my heart yearned for her, while I burned to have her for my bride, my head much

more longed to have her for my consort and helpmate. That sort of reflective desire does not amount to a conflagration of all a man's faculties of brain and sense. It is not having lost her, but how I lost her, that makes me rage.

"You told me the truth when you said I was in danger from the man I trusted most. I did trust Beltran. My intellect appraised him highly, he pleased all my senses, my heart went out to him, I wanted his affection so much that I fooled myself into believing I had it. I trusted him with my head, my heart and my instincts. Only the inertia of long habit preserved me. Unconsciously, involuntarily, I devised tests and took precautions long after I had ceased to have any intention to test him or any suspicion that precautions were necessary. Your warning really saved me, for I had lulled my misgivings to sleep with the notion that it was one of the Mirandas I had seen with Estanislao; you know they are not unlike Beltran. I was that much of a fool. I trusted Beltran to that extent.

"And what drives me frantic is the thought that he ought to have been all I believed him and has turned out completely the reverse. If he only had been man enough to tell me he loved Ventura! I idolised that boy sufficiently to give up Ventura to make him happy. But, however much I trusted him, he could not trust me! That is the thought that makes me almost a maniac. If he had confided in me that would have proved him worthy for the rôle I had assigned to him. I would have had, to solace me for my personal loss, the thought that I was making Ventura happy, that I was making Beltran happy, that I had estimated him correctly, that married and happy with Ventura for consort, he was doubly a fit successor to continue my administration and ensure happiness to my trustful Guaranies and all Paraguay. I could have borne the shock to my self-love and the wound to my vanity if I felt I was perpetuating the blessing of peace for the republic. But Paraguay lies under a curse: while it seems to ennoble the lowly it appears at the same time to degrade every patrician born here or setting foot on the soil.

"Just think of Beltran! Fighting like a paladin at Saragossa, honoured by friends and foes; similarly honoured all through his adventures in Spain; winning laurels and gaining experience of every phase of drill, tactics and

strategy; moulded to the measure of life's greatest opportunities, placed in reach of the loftiest prizes of ambition: and he must cast it all away for a mean-spirited jealousy, must descend to assassination!

"Always assassination in Paraguay.

"Once too often for me!

"I told you I revelled in the zest of the game, in the risk of it, in the secret relish of it, in the keen triumph of it! I revel no more. This has crushed me. All the zest has vanished.

"In the larger sense I see myself baffled at every turn of external diplomacy and internal policy. I am hopeless of winning recognition of Paraguayan independence from the nations of Europe, and establishing diplomatic relations with them. I must keep trying, but it will not come in my time. I am hopeless of establishing our contention that the Paraná is an international water-way free to vessels of all nations. The Porteños, with their greed for port-dues, block me; Candiotti and Artigas block me. England will not entertain my protests. I gloried in the mere obstacles. Now I gloom over the situation and wonder is it worth while to try; like as not Pezuela or La Serna is now on the march across the Chaco with an overwhelming force to reduce Paraguay once again to the status of an appanage of Spain.

"But I must not give way to the thoughts. I must do the best I can here at home.

"What is that best?

"A very poor best.

"A nation ought to consist not merely of a lower class of labourers and yeomen, of a middle class of landowners and traders, but also of an upper class of leisured men of means. We have peons and *Tapé* Indians and *chacareros* to spare. Our lower class is almost all Paraguay. We have not a few *estancieros* and *comerciantes*, and most of them loyal Creoles. But the moneyed men of Paraguay are all old Spaniards, almost to a man. I have used my best intelligence and every device imagination could suggest to make them good and loyal citizens. I despair of the possibility of it. They will emigrate or force me to annihilate them. Once they have vanished that will be the end of any hopes of a real nation in Paraguay, for these perverse

Goths have all the wealth and most of the brains of the country. A populace without brains can never be a genuine nation and many men of small wealth can never give a country that impetus towards prosperity which is not only possible but easy for far fewer men of larger means. Besides the old Spaniards and the Velardes and Casals, we have no men of large means. The old Spaniards are a valuable component of the population of the country. Their silver table services, their silks and satins and velvets and court-swords and pomatumed wigs, their *fiestas* and *tertulias*, their bathings and guitar-twangings; all that must vanish forever. And innocent gaiety and suave urbanity are national assets of no mean value. I grieve to lose all that out of Paraguay. Without it, without them, the nation will degenerate into a herd of boors, the country retrograde till it is hardly more than a wilderness.

"And a few days ago I hoped I might make Paraguay a great nation! For, in defiance of reason, I hoped to overcome all external obstacles: the light of Beltran's optimism seemed to promise great possibilities in respect to diplomacy. And, whereas I had always roused their antagonism, I somehow felt that Beltran might get on the right side of the old Spaniards and cajole them into loyalty. Now, what a change in my outlook! And what a change in me! From hopes of great public usefulness and a peaceful old age, I see myself as I am and as I shall be. In regard to Paraguay I must reduce myself to the hope of keeping off assaults from without and of repressing seditions within, of merely conserving the peasant contentment of my Guaranies, and that no more than for my lifetime, as I can see no ray of hope for a prolongation of peace after I am gone; once my hand relaxes all will be devastation and confusion. The luck that sent Beltran could not be duplicated in a million years. I'll find no hopeful, no possible material for a successor. After me will come some *caudillo*, some nonentity, some Gomez, or Mendez or Lopez or Perez or Benitez or Ramirez or Martinez or Fernandez.

"In regard to myself I dare not go to a *fiesta*, should there ever again be a *fiesta* in Paraguay. I could not ride out to any suburban mansion, not with a regiment of guards. I'd see an Augustin Lopez behind every bush. I can never again hold a levee. To greet a throng of men

in court suits is forever beyond me; the sight of their swords would drive me raving. I cannot receive my own officers to confer with me without having each leave his sword outside. I dare not admit to any audience any foreigner or stranger unsearched. I dare not sleep two nights in succession in the same bed. I dare not ride abroad without guards before and behind, and they must sweep the street clean; the sight of a bystander within pistol shot would make me quake internally. I am condemned to life imprisonment and worse. I, who have taken philosophically all the dangers and uncertainties of life, see myself so shattered in character that, although my intellect views death with calm resignation, my instincts drive irresistibly to the most contemptible precautions to protect my life.

"To protect my life, forsooth, which is now worth nothing to me. This is the curse I must endure, that the less I value my life for what it brings me the more I must treasure it, like a miser with his gold!

"Of course, I know it is my duty to preserve my life for the sake of my Guaranies. But I should prefer to be dignified about it, not crawling and contemptible. And I know that the more I save myself the less I shall be worth saving. I have a wild beast in my blood. Even now, at the thought of Beltran and Ventura together, I can hardly restrain myself from commanding my troops to harry San Bernardino and leave no soul alive. I shall repress my ferocity because they are out of sight. But here at Asuncion, do what I will, seclusion and loneliness will deteriorate me. I shall grow more and more harsh. The old Spaniards will be more and more a thorn in my flesh. I cannot go on forever coddling and wheedling them. They remain hostile. Once I warned them myself, twice I have deputed Gumesindo to blunder an attempt at warning them. The amnesty after the dissolution of your conspiracy was their last warning. The next sedition I detect I'll obliterate the whole pestilential clan. Yes, even Don Bernardo, even the Bishop. Even they are mere rubbish. The chief difference is that while the ex-Intendente is a well-meaning, ineffectual, foolish old gentleman, Padre de Panés is a well-meaning, ineffectual, gentlemanly old fool. Don Bernardo has a dash of docility in his gentlemanliness, the Bishop has a dash of obstinacy in his foolishness.

And they are the best of their class. I'll brook no more conspiracies. At the first suspicion, I'll stand them against a wall and have them shot in a body or pack them into the dungeons, or confine them in the public prison, or, if the *cuartel* will not contain them, banish them to Tevego. The first sharp speech of Don Bermudo Larreta that is reported to me I'll have that old Pelado shot or bayoneted. I feel that I am at the end of my self-control, that my indulgence to them has been too great, that my magnanimity has evaporated."

Here Hawthorne interrupted.

"It seems to me," he said, "that there should be no limits to the magnanimity of the man who could behave as you did to Beltran and Ventura."

"No limits!" Francia groaned. "Every man is born with only a certain share of magnanimity or of capacity for magnanimity. I conceive that all mine was used up to the last crumb when I signed those two orders for Ventura."

He glared at Hawthorne and then flung himself into a chair by the big table, staring at the ceiling.

"Always ingratitude," he said. "I won forty difficult suits at law for Domingo; I refused one as unjust: he hated me implacably. I saved Estanislao's patrimony for him; he hated me unrelentingly. I grant amnesty to the old Spaniards. They hate me. I gave back his eyesight to Ventura's father, she abandons me. I made Beltran my deputy and heir, he turns on me. Life is all dust and ashes!"

He crossed his arms on the table and bent his head on his elbows. Hawthorne rose and walked to him. The bowed head did not move. Hawthorne laid a hand on the quivering shoulder.

"Gaspar!" he said.

Francia sat up and smiled.

"Guillermo," he managed to utter, "you are right! I must be philosophical now and henceforward as heretofore, as if I were worth saving!"

"You are worth saving!" Hawthorne ejaculated.

"Although you only approve my administration in its totality," Francia twinkled, "and not in all its details."

"Even so," Hawthorne smiled back at him, "what administration was ever perfect in all its details?"

"That word," Francia said, standing up, "gives me an idea. I cannot play chess. But perhaps I am still sufficiently myself to argue. Start me. After my abolition of Zorilla, just name the detail of my administration which you most object to."

Hawthorne reflected.

"Condemning men to death," he said, "without evidence or defence."

"As, for instance," the Dictator shot at him, thoroughly revived, and lighting a fresh cigar.

"As Pedro Carbonel," said Hawthorne.

"Evidence!" cried Francia, "what need of evidence or witnesses? I saw him knife Pablo as plainly as I see you. I was not much further off than you."

"Then you are——" Hawthorne began to say, and stopped.

"Yes," Francia triumphed, "my name is Gaspar. And I have roamed the streets at night as Pai Gaspar these many years. Cosmé knows, of course, and enjoys the joke, and keeps his counsel and mine. So does Pai Mbatú."

Hawthorne sat stunned.

Presently he remarked:

"It seems to me Pai Gaspar retains some zest for the game."

"Perhaps," Francia admitted. "I may be saved in character as in person by the inertia of habit. I have had to imitate Haroun al Raschid and circulate in disguise, or I should never learn enough of what goes on in Asuncion to know whether my spies were lying to me or telling the truth."

"At that rate," Hawthorne pursued, "you should find your life worth living yet and yourself worth saving."

"For life imprisonment!" Francia commented bitterly, as suddenly gloomy again as he had been momentarily brighter.

He gnawed at his cigar and then resumed:

"Suppose me worth saving, how am I to go about protecting myself?"

"It seems to me," Hawthorne said, "that you ought to understand what to do far better than I could."

"Not at all," Francia retorted, vigorously. "When I watched you and Beltran playing chess I saw further into

the game than either of you. You are outside this game of hide and seek and should see further into it than I at just the few points I overlook; which, sooner or later, must come to be the vital points."

Hawthorne reflected.

"My first comment," he began, "would be that I have never been able to conjecture why you have a strong guard and a cordon, even an unnecessarily strong cordon, of sentinels all day and not only no guard but not even one single sentinel after dark. That seems to me preposterous. I should say either no sentinels at all or else perpetual sentries, day and night; but if at one time and not at another, then by all means by night."

Francia pinched his cheek meditatively.

"In the first place," he said, "sentinels after dark would scare my Guaranies away from my window; a cordon of sentries would keep them away altogether."

"As you yourself have said," Hawthorne countered, "that you must abandon your practice of night audiences entirely and forever, that consideration vanishes."

"Certainly," the Dictator agreed, "I was explaining the past, not arranging for the future. And as to my other considerations, I had to confer with numerous petitioners by daylight, therefore I needed a guard to inspect applicants and admit only those proper and probably safe. At the same time, I needed a cordon of sentries to ensure that no one approached me except past the guard."

"By night any intruder would certainly be hostile. As the best pistol-shot in Paraguay and almost her best swordsman, I have felt entirely able to protect myself, especially as the Jesuits built for all time, if not for all eternity; their walls are thick, their doors heavy and heavily iron-bound, their window-grills so strong and so solidly built into the walls that, although the bars appear wide-set, no man could squeeze through any except those of my audience-window under the *mirador*, nor could any one man pry them apart; so it was hardly probable that any one man could force his way into the Palacio; as, in fact, none ever has. If any should, I was not afraid. I am a light sleeper and from under a cot or bed one has an ideal opportunity to aim true.

"As against a concerted attack I have not been so reck-



less or so remiss as you suppose. There is always a strong guard all night in the cavalry barrack and a stronger guard in the infantry barrack. The Plaza and the streets round about, from San Blas church to the Dominican Convent, and back from the river as far as Calle Encarnacion, are always patrolled by unobtrusive idlers with orders to ignore individuals but to report at once at the barracks anything like a gathering or a body of men in motion. As you know, there is an all-night guard at the foot of the landing stairs. So I have been and am almost as well guarded by night as by day."

"That leaves out of account the inlet," said Hawthorne. "You are habitually in your library with the door open into the garden. You are often in the garden, absorbed with your telescope, wholly in the dark. What is to prevent a miscreant from swimming the lagoon, scrambling up the bank and biding his time in the garden? What is to prevent a band of miscreants from slipping one by one into the bushes and scrub on the banks above and below Soloaga's shipyard, lurking there unsuspected, swimming the lagoon and rushing you all at once?"

Francia's eyes twinkled.

"You must let me keep one or two secrets," he smiled. "Be assured no band of cut-throats, no single bravo, will ever swim the inlet-lagoon of the Riachuelo and scale the bank of my garden; I am well, even perfectly, protected on that side.

"You see, my arrangements have not been silly nor accidental; the point is how to better them, how to diminish the risks, or abolish the risks, I run. In my place, what would you do?"

"I," said Hawthorne, "would abandon this attractive abode and migrate into the Cabildo. Then I should clear a broad space round it by tearing down some of the low, ramshackle buildings to the southeast and both buildings to the southwest, between it and the Riachuelo. On this side I should sacrifice the entire two-storied portion of this mass of buildings all along the southeast side of the small south *patio* which Espinosa used for a tobacco factory and which you still use for a tobacco warehouse. That side of that courtyard could be closed by a high wall.

"That would give you broad, open spaces all about the

Cabildo. You could then have a small guard-house built some yards from each corner of the Cabildo and keep a guard of three men in each day and night, with two sentinels always patrolling between each pair. With a fifth guard at the entrance of the Cabildo you would be as safe as possible, for the Cabildo is stronger built and more heavily barred than this mass of buildings. You would not be so comfortable in it, but the courtyard is large enough to permit you to use your telescope and the dividing wall assures you reasonable privacy. That is the sum of my advice."

"As I listen," Francia said, "I seem to hear myself thinking out loud. I have acquired, I think, all the prestige I am likely to gain by living in this Palacio. While I lived here the *alto* was an asset; as there is no other two-story structure in Paraguay, it added to the impression of my preeminence. Once domiciled in the Cabildo it would be well to demolish the *alto*, as then no other building would overshadow the Cabildo, either actually or metaphorically. I can think of no safer arrangements than those you suggest, and I had thought of all of them for myself. I'll adopt them.

"And, at the same time, I'll sweep away some anachronisms in my methods of ruling. While I hoped, by founding a dynasty or training a successor, to ensure the perpetuation of my government, I had need of ministers. If I can merely postpone chaos until my death, I require no cabinet. Why should I not manage in form as well as in fact all the details of the administration? When I move into the old Palacio I'll rid myself of Gumesindo and Ponciano and all the rest except Andres and Policarpo. The additional hard work imposed upon me will make me feel less my loneliness and isolation, and the steady labour will keep me from brooding. The more I am occupied the better off I shall be.

"When I start clearing land around the Cabildo I'll keep on in all directions until I have opened straight streets throughout the city. Your disapproval of that plan of mine I dismiss as a personal whim of yours. But it is the only piece of bad advice I ever had from you. All your other advice has been good. Your conception of measures to ensure my safety coincides with my own. And I think

better of my notions since your independent hitting upon the same ideas confirms my judgment. Comfort matters little to a lonely recluse. What I shrink from is not discomfort but deterioration, as I said a while ago. I have hideous tendencies to hold in leash. At the moment I am suddenly ashamed of unbosoming myself to you as I never have to any human being. My impulse is to have you shot at dawn to make sure my weakness will never be divulged. But be assured I shall not yield to my impulse. You may sleep in unruffled tranquillity."

With the word "sleep" Hawthorne thought he heard a tone which he interpreted as a dismissal. He stood up and they passed out into the garden. At the first glimpse of the stars he felt a sudden revulsion of feeling towards his companion. Those same stars shone down in Cecilia's hut in the prison. The sight of them somehow made Francia seem only a cruel tyrant. And the touch of his hanger as he found it by the orange-tree, of his belt as he buckled it about him, somehow made the Dictator seem a cowardly tyrant. As he walked behind him under the archway, across the fore-court and to the outer doorway, he was aware of a tide of angry hostility rising within him. Something suggested how easy it would be to grasp his hidden poniard and plunge it into Francia's back. Something whispered to him that Cecilia would then be free. His reason told him that the troops would likely butcher every prisoner in their fury at losing their adored *Carai*, but his weaker nature toyed with the idea. His hand still grasped the hilt of the poniard while the Dictator unbarred the door and shot back the bolts.

As the door swung inward, Francia suddenly exclaimed: "That smell!"

As he heard the words and smelt the strange blend of unpleasant odours, or even before, Hawthorne saw a female form hurl itself through the opening of the door, saw her arm uplifted and realised one more assassin. He could not catch at her or strike at her with his fist, since his right hand clutched the hilt of his dagger. The instinct to save the great man dominated him without his knowing it. Poniard and all, his right hand came out of his bosom and struck with all his lightning strength. He felt the blade plunge deep. The black-clad form collapsed between them.

Francia slammed the door and threw one bar across it, then the others, then shot the bolts.

Hawthorne could hear the dry breath rattle in the Dictator's throat.

But when he spoke his voice was controlled.

"There are candles in the guard-room," he said.

Hawthorne stood petrified until Francia returned, putting his tinder-box into his waistcoat pocket as he came, his left hand trembling so the candle shook.

By its light they both saw the pitifully limp ankles, the poniard-hilt gleaming in the candle rays; all else a huddle of black gown and black shawl; all else except the face.

Hawthorne stared at the face, bent over it, sank on one knee and scrutinized what he shrank from, then staggered to his feet and groaned:

"I have killed Doña Cecilia Rodriguez."

"Yes!" Francia echoed, in a strange voice. "You have killed Doña Cecilia Rodriguez!"

"Do you realise what this means for me?" Hawthorne snarled at him. And he poured out a torrent of self-reproach, imprecations, curses and revilings at the Dictator.

Standing and eyeing him Francia was now wholly himself, the candle flame did not so much as quiver. When he spoke Hawthorne realised, for the first and last time in his life, what it was to acknowledge a master, to yield to a superior will.

"Man!" he said, "be silent and listen to me. I realise what this means to you far better than you do. You have killed a woman whom you never set eyes on in your life till the instant you stabbed her. Contain yourself until to-morrow and you will find no cause to upbraid yourself or execrate me. Hold the candle; there must be ink on the table in the officer's room."

He led the way haughtily, head erect, Hawthorne meekly following.

In the small room where Beltran had so often presided Francia found pens, tried a dozen and finally wrote a paper. He handed it to Hawthorne, who read it by the candle-light.

It ordered Gomez to release from the *cuartel* any pris-

oner, male or female, whom Don Guillermo Atorno should specify.

"When you have made use of that order," Francia said meaningly, "you will no longer, Guillermo, find fault with yourself or with me."

Again, near the main door, they both stared at the dead woman, and Francia covered her face with the corner of her shawl.

"Do you recognise the smell now, Guillermo?" he asked, sniffing.

"Partly that of a Payaguá *toldo*," Hawthorne replied.

"And the rest?" Francia insisted.

"I do not recognise the other component," Hawthorne said.

"I'll wager you do," the Dictator sneered, "and are trying to protect the delinquent, after your sentimental fashion. Never mind, I recognise it and comprehend."

"But," Hawthorne quavered, "if this is Señora Rodríguez here dead, who is the lady in the hut inside the *cuartel* courtyard?"

"That is what I'd like to know and don't," said Francia. "Ask her to-morrow. Perhaps she'll tell you."

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### CECILY

#### (1)

THE bland Castilian outer calm that swathed the volcanic nature of Gomez the jailer was visibly ruffled at being disturbed even before the sun had cleared the horizon. Yet his amazement showed for but a moment; almost instantly he was all suavity and eagerness to oblige. He unlocked the gate of the inner stockade, roused the old negress and admitted Hawthorne.

Inside the hut he found her standing, as fresh, neat and seemly as if she had had unlimited time for a toilet. At sight of his face she exclaimed:

"You have news! Is it all over?"

"All over, Señorita," he answered; "she is dead."

"Poor thing," she mourned. "I did my best for her. They could have escaped, but they would think of nothing but revenge."

And then, as they gazed at each other, she cried:

"Oh, Will, it is such a relief to be able to speak English."

The next moment his arms were about her and she was sobbing on his shoulder.

When she quieted he asked:

"Is your name Cecilia?"

"Yes," she gulped, "Cecilia D'Arcy, but please call me Cecily."

As they walked together, hand in hand, like children, up Calle Santo Domingo, with the early sunlight and the clean dawn-wind on their faces, they heard fifes and drums and saw before them the escort customary to an official proclaiming a decree. As they turned the corner opposite the church of the Incarnation they heard the *bando* read:

"Henceforward and forever Payaguá Indians would be allowed in Paraguay only between sunrise and sunset. All *toldos* of Payaguá Indians wherever found in Paraguay were to be immediately and totally destroyed. Any Payaguá Indian, male or female, found constructing a *toldo* would be instantly put to death, as would any Payaguá found in Paraguay between sunset and sunrise."

Walking along Calle Encarnacion they heard the sound of the drum and fifes die away in the distance behind them. Together, hand in hand, he guiding tenderly, they crossed the swamp of the Riachuelo on the very log along which Hawthorne had followed Don Gregorio on his first afternoon in Asuncion a year ago. At Casa Mayorga the entire household was agog to welcome Cecily.

When she reappeared, bathed, combed and freshly attired, they had a gay breakfast, over which she told her story. For she was the reverse of reticent since her release.

"After Aunt Lucy died," she continued, "brother Phelim and I were as alone as if we had no kinsfolk on earth. Phelim was for seeking his fortunes overseas, for he said he hated Ireland almost as much as England. When he told me we were to sail for Buenos Aires I said perhaps we had cousins there, for maybe Aunt Roberta had left some children, we had never been told whether she had any, who

was it she married, some name like Balcarres? And he swore and said he did not care whether it was Balcarres or Ballincollig or Ballinhassig, he did not know the name and he did not want to know it. If he thought she had left any children there he'd go somewhere else, he was ashamed of every drop of Goad blood in his body, and hated all the Goads; they were all the same; the Goads of Tamworth Lodge were only the worst of all of them, they were all contemptible. They talked as if running off to marry a brave Irish officer, and him distinguished on the field, was the greatest of all crimes. They were all alike. Even Aunt Lucy was half a Goad and ashamed of her sister. If it hadn't been for the spite and malice of some of the rest of the Goads we'd never so much as have known where our father and mother were buried. Aunt Lucy herself had acknowledged she had burnt their miniatures.

"He raved that way all during the voyage, whenever he had had too much, and that was often, for the fourteen weeks were dull and tiresome.

"At Buenos Aires we lodged with the family of Don Medardo Benitez, whom I did not like at all. And I disliked the men who frequented the house and the men Phelim brought there. Some of them paid me compliments and I liked them least of all. And Phelim quarrelled with me because I did not like them. There was a young Don Feliciano Chiclana, who wanted to marry me. They said his father was a learned man and wealthy. But he himself was detestable. Then there was an Englishman, a Mr. Henry Okes, and another, a Mr. William Stroud. I did not like either of them. But Phelim raged at me and cursed me and said I was a fool to refuse the chance of a good husband, and he called me a bad sister and said he had lost money at cards to Mr. Stroud and I ought to marry him for his sake. I did not hate Mr. Stroud, only I could not like him. But I disliked Mr. Okes and I hated Don Feliciano. Phelim quarrelled with me dreadfully and hardly spoke to me. He was away more and more, sometimes out two nights in succession. I was very lonely, for Doña Pastora Benitez and I did not get on well together and her two daughters I could not like.

"Then Phelim did not come home at all. I never saw him again. I began to realise that something dreadful had hap-

pened. So I had to talk to Doña Pastora. She said I was a fool to cry, Phelim was not worth crying about. Then she began to ask how much money I had. I would not let her know how little it was, but she suspected, and said I ought to marry Don Feliciano. I said I was going to see Mr. Ponsonby Staples, the English Consul. She said I could go if I wished, but she would not go with me nor send any one with me, if I chose to go out into the streets alone I could take the consequences. I had never gone out without one of them with me or one of the maids, at least, and then I had only gone to church at the Cathedral or the church of San Domingo. I said she ought not to refuse to send some one with me, but she was obstinate, and I thought she was trying to scare me into marrying Don Feliciano. I was frightened. I was afraid to go out alone and more afraid not to go. I went. It was horrible. Men spoke to me rudely, insultingly. I did not know the way to the British Consulate, and when I stopped some ladies and asked them they were haughty and contemptuous. I felt hopeless. Then I met Don Feliciano. He stopped me and though I did not half understand him I was terrified. I started to run, and from where I was I only knew the way to the church of San Domingo. Just before I reached the church a Spanish gentleman stared at me as I came and planted himself in my way. He called to me before I was near him:

“ ‘Cecilia! Why are you running? Why are you alone? What does this mean?’ ”

“I had never set eyes on him before, and I was panic-struck. I avoided him and ran on, with him after me, calling:

“ ‘Cecilia! Cecilia!’ ”

“I rushed into the church and into the priest’s compartment of the nearest confessional. It was empty and I hid there a long time. When I crept out and looked about the church there was no one in sight. I went up near the altar-rail and kneeled down and begged God’s pardon for what I was going to do. For I had made up my mind to stay there until dark and then slip out and drown myself in the basin of the fountain. I was certain that death would be better than going back to Señora Benitez. While I was praying and trying not to sob out loud, I heard a voice



behind me. I did not know much Spanish then, but I understood what he said:

“‘There, look at her. There she is. Do you believe me now?’

“After a short silence I heard a swish of skirts, a soft hand was laid on my shoulder and a woman’s voice said:

“‘Señorita, may I speak to you?’

“I turned.

“I might have been looking into a mirror.

“She was as much startled as I was.

“She explained that her husband, Don Domingo Rodriguez, had come home in great agitation and had appeared amazed at finding her there. When he accounted for his excitement by telling of seeing her alone on the street and running, of her passing him, of his pursuing her into the church, of her hiding in a confessional, of his waiting until she came out, of his then surmising that she was deranged, and returning home for assistance from her nurse and maid, she suspected him of insanity. They had quarrelled, and he had proposed to settle the dispute by returning to the church with her. So they had found me.

“Our astonishing resemblance amazed us both.

“When we told each other our names we were more amazed.

“She questioned me further, and as soon as I told her my mother was born Emily Goad and her mother Cecilia Nesbit she asked whether my mother had a sister Roberta. At once she told me she had been born Cecilia Balcarce, and was my own cousin.

“Then I told her my story.

“They took me home with them and were good to me. Don Domingo had my things brought from the Benitez house and instituted a search for Phelim. It was two days later when Doña Cecilia gently broke the news to me that he had been found in the Riachuelo below the hide warehouses.

“After his funeral they were everything to me. I learnt Spanish and became acquainted with many people in Buenos Aires, through them and Uncle Preciado Balcarce, who was kind to me, though his second wife did not get on well with Doña Cecilia.

"I was not unhappy at Buenos Aires and very happy at Corrientes.

"When we came here and Domingo was arrested I did what I could to comfort Cecilia. She was so crushed with anxiety that she could not go to the prison the third day. I went in her place. No one knew the difference. That put into my head the idea of how to set him free.

"You know the rest."

(2)

Hawthorne judged it politic to go early to the Palacio and rehearse Cecily's story to the Dictator. He appeared to relish it and took large pinches of snuff.

"A brave and resolute young woman," he commented. "I am glad she is at liberty. Her devotion was worthy of a better cause. I infer that you mean to marry her. Naturally. Well, I entirely approve."

They were interrupted by the entrance of a lieutenant and four soldiers conveying Soloaga. Francia glared at him.

"*Bribon*," he snarled, "did I not yesterday order you to select eleven lapacho timbers for use in the extension of the barracks?"

"Yes, Excellency," Soloaga replied, submissively.

"Where are they?" Francia demanded.

"Excellency," Soloaga explained, "I was hard pushed to complete that *polacca* for Don Meliton Isasi. I postponed selecting the balks until to-day. I was just about to begin when I was arrested."

"*Bribonazo!*" Francia thundered, "you dare to tell me that you postponed public business for private gain. You are a useless citizen of this republic. You deserve to be shot. But I shall be merciful. You are given twenty-four hours and more to leave the country, which you disgrace. If you are found after noon to-morrow within the boundaries of Paraguay you shall go to the *banquillo*. Depart!"

Soloaga, released by his guards, slunk away, the soldiers following him.

Francia sighed.

"Always treason or incompetence in Paraguay," he groaned, "or both together."

Then he resumed, in his normal voice:

"I was about to say that, as you wish to marry, I had best give you an order to the Bishop to perform the ceremony. You can make use of it when you please. Without it he would boggle at marrying two heretics."

He turned to his table, but gazed past it across the *patio* with so sudden a change of countenance that Hawthorne whirled about and cast a quick glance towards the entrance. El Zapo was halfway across the court, waddling towards them.

"Curro!" the Dictator shouted, peremptorily, "how did you come here?"

"S-S-S-Señor Excelentísimo," the fat man stammered, "I w-w-walked."

"I mean," Francia snapped, "which way did you come?"

"S-S-S-Señor Excelentísimo," El Zapo stuttered, "I c-c-c-came past the Encarnacion church, around b-b-behind the c-c-convent of M-M-Mercy and then d-d-down C-C-Calle C-C-Concepcion."

"Why did you go all that distance out of your way?" came the question.

"I w-w-wanted to see P-P-Pai M-M-Mbatú," the shipwright explained.

"Nhm!" Francia grunted. "When did you leave home?"

"B-B-Before sunup," the fat man replied.

Francia stared at him hard.

"I believe you are telling the truth," he said. "Why did you come here, Pancho?"

"To g-g-give m-m-myself up," El Zapo answered.

"Why?" the Dictator queried.

"Señor Excelentísimo," Riquelme made answer without any hesitation or catch in his voice, "I have committed treason by harbouring one of your Excellency's enemies. I did not know it until yesterday. Therefore, I have come to give myself up."

"Why did you not come yesterday?" Francia enquired.

"I was putting my affairs in order," El Zapo replied, his voice even and smooth. "I am now ready to be shot."

"What enemy of mine did you harbour?" the Dictator demanded.

"S-S-Señor Excelentísimo," the fat man answered, "if

your Excellency will read this paper, your Excellency will understand."

Francia took the paper, held it unopened and asked:

"Then you did not know I had ordered you arrested this morning?"

"No, Excellency," El Zapo replied.

"Francisco," the Dictator said, "I believe you."

He read the paper, seemed to read it twice, and handed it to Hawthorne, who read:

"When you read this I shall be dead. For either I shall to-night kill the tyrant and myself afterwards or I shall die in the attempt. I thank you for your kindness and protection and for the shelter you gave my husband and have given me.

"Your grateful friend,

"CECILIA RODRIGUEZ Y BALCARCE."

The Dictator fixed El Zapo with an angry gaze.

"And you dare to tell me," he said, "that until yesterday you did not know you were harbouring an enemy of mine?"

"Señor Excelentísimo," the giant replied, "it is the truth. Don Domingo asserted that he had no designs against your Excellency. Doña Cecilia made the same assertions upon oath again and again. Both claimed that they were only awaiting a chance to escape to Corrientes. I believed them."

"Why did you shelter them at first?" Francia cross-questioned him. "You knew Don Domingo had escaped from prison here."

"Señor Excelentísimo," El Zapo rejoined, "I was a broken and starving wretch at Buenos Aires when Don Preciado Balcarce befriended me and gave me a fresh start at my trade. It was he who set me up in business at Corrientes. I could not fail his daughter or her husband. Besides, it was Don Domingo who advised me to remove from Corrientes to Asuncion. I owed much to him also, personally."

The Dictator's browbeating glare he met unflinchingly, a not undignified figure as he stood, twisting his greasy Barcelona cap.

"I am r-r-ready t-t-to b-b-be sh-sh-shot," he stuttered, painfully.

"Señor Don Francisco!" Francia rapped out, "you are not going to be shot. You are a brave man, and I do not shoot brave men unless they force me to do so. You are also a good citizen. I never shoot good citizens. What is more, you are a good shipwright, and, after to-morrow, you will be not only the best shipwright in Paraguay, but the only shipwright in Asuncion. I cannot afford to shoot you. Go back to your wife."

El Zapo bowed awkwardly.

"*Muchas gracias*, Señor Excelentísimo!" was all he said. He waddled off.

Francia rooted among his papers on his table.

"I must not forget that order to the Bishop," he said.

Before he had found a pen to suit him Bopî was beside him.

"Who?" he queried. "Well, let him come in."

Pai Mbatú appeared and approached.

"Well," Francia snapped.

"Excellency," Pai Mbatú said, "I have come to give myself up."

"Indeed!" Francia cried. "The disease is then epidemic. And why do you wish to give yourself up?"

"For treason," Pai Mbatú explained. "I have been harbouring, from time to time, two of your Excellency's enemies."

"Domingo and his wife?" the Dictator queried.

Pai Mbatú nodded.

The Dictator glared at him.

"You harboured her, that close to me?"

Pai Mbatú shrugged his shoulders.

"She could not guess you were ever that close to my hut," he said, "any more than you could guess where she was. And I did not know of her designs on you. I thought I was doing an act of harmless charity. Since I am aware of her deception and my guilt I have come to be shot."

"Pooh!" Francia snorted. "I wouldn't waste three bullets on you. You are not such a bad sort. Would you do it again?"

"Not if I knew I was giving shelter to an assassin,"

Pai Mbatú said. "But I should shelter any refugee otherwise."

"Be off!" the Dictator grunted. "Or, stay! Have a cigar before you go."

He called Bopî, who brought a small *petacon* and lifted the lid.

"Take a handful," Francia said. "Fill your pockets. Light one before you go."

Pai Mbatú helped himself to cigars, lit one at the candle on the table, puffed at it, and then stood, the cigar between the two outer fingers of his left hand, bowing and pouring out thanks.

As Francia was bidding him cease talking and go, the cigar exploded.

Pai Mbatú, yelling with pain and fright, clutching his bleeding hand in the other, first staggered about the *patio* and then rolled on the pavement, bellowing with terror and agony.

"Run for Dr. Parlett," Francia commanded Bopî.

"He's waiting at the entrance now," the mulatto said, and returned in a moment with the little surgeon, who calmed Pai Mbatú, declared the injury slight, and bandaged the mangled hand, saying:

"With a good soaking in Guarani eye-lotion that hand will heal easily. There are no bones broken and the flesh is not much torn. Cheer up. You'll be whole in two weeks."

After Parlett had transacted his brief business and gone out Francia turned gloomily to Hawthorne and remarked:

"That *petacon* of cigars will never be traced. I'll never find out who put the powder in that cigar. Charming life, this life of mine. To the long list of depressing precautions I must take daily I must now add the necessity of unrolling and examining before I light it every cigar I mean to smoke.

"All the same," he continued, "I must go on with my routine duties and try to keep cheerful. At the moment I must not forget that order to the Bishop."

(3)

That very noon a brig from Buenos Aires reached Asuncion with several packets for Hawthorne. There was a letter from Mr. John Postlethwaite, of Corrientes, full especially of the news of the successive defeats of Artigas by the Brazilians and of their capture of Montevideo; another from Doña Juanita and Don Manuel Bianquet at Buenos Aires, full of the same news but more of their comfort, prosperity, happiness and gratitude. There was one from Messrs. Valentine and Little, of Philadelphia, informing Hawthorne that he was heir to the property of the late Mr. Jabez Darlington, of that city. The sum which they named as their least valuation of the estate completely staggered Hawthorne, who had been master of a comfortable income since his majority, but who had never expected to find himself opulent.

The news of his legacy was confirmed by Don Sigismundo Mendez, brother of Don Avelino, who arrived on the brig, bringing for Hawthorne from Messrs. Valentine and Little, through Consul Ponsonby Staples, of Buenos Aires, a fat sack of gold pieces, a very substantial remittance.

Cecily, when told of this amazing windfall, exclaimed:

"Then we can leave Paraguay as soon as we are married. That is precisely what I want."

Hawthorne said nothing, but she saw his face alter, and asked:

"Did you mean to remain here?"

"I did," he confessed. "Have you forgotten my plans for a world-wide market for *yerba* and a Paraguayan monopoly?"

"No," she admitted, "but Uncle Jabez has put you beyond any real need for such efforts, even if they are to lead to such success. You don't hate Paraguay as I do. You spent a great part of your time in the prison, Will, but you have never 'been in prison.'"

Her eyes filled with tears.

"Will," she added, "I love you dearly, and will do anything you really want, but I do not believe I could ever be happy in Asuncion or feel reconciled to staying in this dreadful country."

Hawthorne was prompt to make up his mind and quick to act. He lost no time in going to the Palacio.

Francia heard him out with knitted brows.

"I regret our dreams of world-monopoly of *yerba*," he said, "but I shall regret you more. I have no right to let you go. It is my duty to Paraguay to keep you here. At the least I should exact of you a park of artillery and a mountain of good powder as the price of your freedom. But, as I have reiterated, I cannot forget that but for you I should not be alive to give any orders about anything. That consideration overbalances in my eyes my duty to my people. But I know I shall grind my teeth many a time when I think of all I let go when I signed your passports. You shall have them, of course. As to the gold, I know I should keep that. But while I am most sedulous to prevent the export of even one ounce of our scanty silver, while gold is yet scantier, I see no justice in retaining what came to-day only. You shall have authority to take your gold with you. Make your arrangements and come for your passports when you please."

The next morning Cecily and Hawthorne were married at the Encarnacion church, Don Vicente himself giving the bride away. Bishop de Panés performed the ceremony, addressing the two benignantly:

"Dear children, I am told, whether rightly or wrongly, that you are both heretics, strangers to the blessed peace which belongs only to the happy members of our Mother Church. Be it known to you that at Asuncion the Grace of God is manifested in a very special manner. It may be that by the mysterious working of His Divine Providence He may have already put it into your hearts to avail yourselves of His infinite mercy, to forsake all errors, to ask for admittance to the fold of His shepherd upon earth. I pause in order that you may have opportunity to express your desires.

"But if you have no such inclination, be sure that even so, Our Heavenly Father has you in His keeping, and that, in some fashion incomprehensible to us, your state of mind will ultimately work for the greater glory of God."

After the wedding, to their amazement, the pair were convoyed to Casa Velarde, which they found made ready for them, and where they read letters from Don Toribio, Car-



Iota and Ventura, putting the house and servants at their disposal indefinitely, and begging their acceptance of "this trifle." Cecily was visibly touched, but declared that not even this could reconcile her to remaining in Paraguay a day longer than was absolutely necessary.

Hawthorne thereupon set himself to arrange for their departure, and to consider the best method of descending the river to Buenos Aires.

When his arrangements were completed Hawthorne paid a farewell visit to the Dictator. He signed all the necessary papers and passed them over.

"I trust," he said, "I shall not have too bitter cause to regret my folly in letting you go or to miss the cannon you might have cast for me or the powder you might have manufactured or helped towards manufacturing. With you, in two years more, iron-founding in Paraguay would be on a secure footing. Without you, I fear your pupils may lose their cunning or fail to transmit it to others. The iron industry may relapse into its former insignificance. Even yet, for the sake of my Guaranies, I should harden my heart and detain you. I shall not. And I confess I am selfishly most likely to regret our evenings and chess-games. I shall bear my loneliness as best I can, but no resolution can avail me. I shall deteriorate. I shall wear my uniform less and less and my dressing-gown more and more. I shall grow harsher and more suspicious, more arbitrary, more capricious, less just. That is my fate. I shall miss you.

"But one thing I want to say. While Beltran's perfidy has been my greatest grief, the worst scare I ever had was just before you stabbed Señora Rodriguez. I know you had your hand gripped on that poniard hilt to murder me. I knew it. Only her inrush saved me. I could not have defended myself against your quickness and strength and skill. Yet I condone the intention and call you my friend. You saved me five times at least from assassination; the last time from her and yourself. I am grateful, and we part friends, Guillermo."

"We do, Gaspar," said Hawthorne.

He stood up and bowed.

"*Vaya Usted con Dios,*" spoke the Dictator.

"*Quede Usted con Dios,*" Hawthorne echoed.

But, after the formal interchange of the conventional "Go with God" and "Remain with God," Francia put out his hand and, as they clasped, he said, in English:

"Good-bye, William."

"Good-bye, Gaspar," said Hawthorne.

(4)

Before the invention of double topsails even small brigs required very large crews to handle their unwieldy expanses of canvas. Sailing down the long, winding reaches of the Rio Paraguay and Rio Paraná was, on the whole, quicker than floating down with the current, because a brig or brigantine could furl all sail and float against the wind with a favourable current, set all sail and outstrip the current when the wind served. But it was not much quicker; for a raft would float faster with the current against the wind than a brig with bare poles, since even bare poles offered some hold to the air; and a raft would float nearly as fast as a brig could sail.

As a *piragua*, having no sails, required a much smaller crew than any sailing vessel, and as, therefore, she would have more room for passengers, Hawthorne preferred a *piragua*. The slight difference in time would be of little importance to him and Cecily, happy in each other's society, and the down-river journey held out promises of many delights, chiefly from the scenery of the islands. These were, as Hawthorne recalled from his tedious voyage upstream, all beautiful, no two alike and so numerous that there was hardly one single point between Corrientes and Buenos Aires where the river spread unbroken from the eastern to the western bank. If in view of the Gran Chaco, one was cut off from even a glimpse of the Entre Rios bank, and vice versa. The islands were of every form and size, and lay at every possible angle, lying abreast of each other; some long, narrow strips, running parallel with several smaller; some with their ends overlapping others; the river among them running not merely in two channels but often four or five, through an endless tangle of devious cross-channels, between mingled isles and islets.

Also it was not in Hawthorne's nature to miss an op-

portunity for procuring profit. His thrifty New England blood mastered him, no matter how much spare cash he had in hand, or how ample an income he had in prospect.

Therefore, he had chosen to leave Asuncion in a *piragua*, a characteristically Paraguayan form of vessel, used only for navigation with the current. For a voyage "*aguas abajo*," or downstream, nothing could be more dependable or convenient.

A *piragua* was a kind of scow, a rectangular box, with a flat bottom and with sides sloping outward so that the rectangle formed by their upper edges was about twice the size of the bottom from which they rose. All round this upper margin was constructed a sort of gangway for the steersmen, rowers, leadsmen, lookouts and working crew generally. This flat overhang, extending over the water, catching and repulsing the wash of any large wave, made it possible to load a *piragua* very deep without any danger of shipping water inboard; so that a loaded *piragua* was extremely safe and steady.

It was customary to fill the hull with cargo to the level of its top, to lay over the contents a flooring of planks and above this flooring to construct a deckhouse, called a "*troxa*" or trough. This was built by setting up, from the gunwales of the hull, stout posts about nine feet high, the tops of which were connected by light beams, and the resulting framework was completed with wicker-work sides of strong standing bamboo-canes interlaced and held in place by hide ropes and thongs stretched from the posts; and with a roof of similar canes laid across covered with a water-proof top of tightly sewn hides; awning, casing and upper-deck all in one, sloping every way enough to throw off the rain, flat enough to sit on or walk on, and with a low hide-netting on all sides for a safety railing.

It was usual to cram the deck-house nearly full with almost half of the cargo. Hawthorne, buying a large *piragua*, and lading sixteen hundred *serons* of *yerba* into its hold, merely strengthened his deck house with a bare hundred *serons* ranked up and roped tight at each corner. The rest of the space he had partitioned off into a cabin for himself and Cecily, a cooking galley, cubby-hole hutches for Cecily's maid and for Tolomeo, unusually generous

quarters for the crew, and an open space for air and shelter during rains.

To see them off nearly all the aristocracy of Asuncion assembled at the water-front and formed almost a crowd of gaily-bedizened gentry. The mass of his fellow-conspirators were still a trifle shamefaced in Hawthorne's presence and stood in clusters in the rear of the gathering. Well towards the front were all the members of the Mayorga household, the Recaldes, the Jovellanos clan, Don Avelino Mendez and his brother Don Sigismundo, Don Marcos Barbeito, and Don Cristobal de Maria, still pathetically grateful to Hawthorne. All four Priors were present, and also Fray Damaso Montiel. With Don Vicente were grouped Parlett, Dr. Bargas, the ex-Intendente, and General Cabañas.

Don Atanacio, looking straight into Hawthorne's eyes, expressed his regrets at his departure, and said with Castilian floridity:

"Señor Don Guillermo, I have met in my life no braver man than yourself, none more upright. Had you found us as you imagined us, the upshot of your errand here would have been as you purposed."

Don Bernardo took Hawthorne's hand in both of his:

"If any one of our boys had survived," he said, "if my dear wife had lived to see him at your age, we could have wished our son such a man as you."

Dr. Bargas wrung Hawthorne's hand again and again.

"Paraguay loses much in your departure," he perorated. "If the Marquess de Torretagle de Lima himself were here and leaving, we could not mourn his departure more than yours."

Parlett, his eyes watering, slapped Hawthorne on the shoulder:

"My boy," he said, "I envy you. I hate this country and I hate the thought of dying here. England for me. But only a miracle could ever convey me home to England. If old Sour-Face would let me go, if I had your bag of doubloons, I'd likely gamble the gold-pieces and get so dead drunk I'd never wake up till the vessel was leagues down the river. I'm an old sot and an old fool. You're young and you're lucky. I envy you."

Conspicuous in all directions were Don Gumesindo superintending everything, and Don Gregorio, beaming on everybody. He had adopted Cecily as a sort of honorary goddaughter, and treated as if they were his own children both her and Hawthorne, who had found it impossible to avoid a complete reconciliation with him. In his dove-drab coat he pervaded the water-front, the gang-plank and the *piragua*. Standing on its deck, at the last moment, he said: "My dear children, I cannot realise that I am not to accompany you, to voyage with you down the Paraná."

"That," spake Don Gumesindo, "is a coincidence, I may say— a— a— a; in short, a coincidence. Yes, a coincidence. Your prescience, Don Gregorio, your prevision, your presage, your prognostication, your intuition is remarkable, extraordinary, amazing. In short, this is a coincidence. You are to sail down the Rio Paraguay, at least, on this very *piragua*. Such is El Supremo's will. I have here a paper, a document, if you comprehend me, an order, in short, a decree, by which you are commanded to leave the boundaries of the republic and return no more, that is, to say, you are exiled, in short banished. By El Supremo's forethought, your effects are already on the *piragua* upon which you are to depart."

He bowed elaborately, and in so doing stepped off the gang-plank and with a mighty splash vanished into the water.

Instantly, before any one could move, another splash sounded, and Hawthorne, Cecily, Don Gregorio and the rest, peering over the side or the bank, saw Hero also in the water, saw Don Gumesindo's head come to the surface, saw Hero seize the broad collar of his coat and, as they looked, saw Tolomeo dive overboard.

The dog held up the fat Don just long enough to enable Tolomeo to reach him. Tolomeo was able to sustain him and also to breast the strong current. The *vagueano* of the *piragua* threw a rope craftily, and dog, servant and minister were soon hauled out.

Don Gumesindo regarded his draggled finery ruefully, streaming water from every thread of his velvets and satins.

"I am damp," he remarked. "That is to say, I am

soaking; in fact, dripping; in other words, I am moist, to put it plainly, saturated; in short, wet."

His accident and rescue somewhat mitigated the emotions aroused by Don Gregorio's dismay and grief. The *vaqueano* was impatient, Cecily eager to be gone. The crowd of well-wishers completed their several and individual farewells, the ropes that held the gang-plank were being loosened, when a shout was heard and a rider galloped through the hastily-opening crowd. Hawthorne saw under his broad-brimmed hat a red face barred by two diagonal stripes of whitish-blue, and recognised Don Carlampio Borda, the overseer of Atirá. He brought letters from Don Toribio, Carlota, Doña Juana, Beltran and Ventura. The letters delivered, he wheeled his horse and spurred away.

At once the crew cast off the gang-plank and pushed the *piragua* from the shore; the *vaqueano* disposed his men and gave his orders; out into the current she swung.

Don Gregorio, his eyes filled with tears, ascended the hide roof of the *troxa*, and from there waved his perfumed white silk handkerchief in farewell to his *comadres* and *compadres*.

When Hawthorne and Cecily came up the ladder he walked forward and left them in possession of the red and white striped awning which Hawthorne had had rigged up at the stern. Under it they seated themselves on two light chairs Don Vicente had provided.

The *vaqueano* ran from side to side, always on the outlook for cross-currents, always yelling orders to his men. A Payaguá with a twenty-foot bamboo stood at each forward corner of the craft, continually taking soundings, four polers walked the forward gangway to stave off any danger of going aground on a sand-bar, six rowers on either side-gangway worked their sweeps to assist the current, four steersmen with long, broad-bladed oars worked on the after gangway.

Thus borne, the two, hand in hand, watched the water-front recede, saw the city grow smaller and far off, beheld the Cathedral tower become a mere tiny blot above the horizon, saw the palm-tasselled summit of Cerro de Ta-

cumbú and the conical top of Cerro de Lambaré against the sky grow vague and indistinct, and knew that their eyes had rested for the last time on Asuncion. Ten days later, as they swept slowly through the long, curving reaches of Tres Bocas, they caught their last glimpse of the shores of Paraguay.

**THE END**











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